PIOUS

LECTURES,

EXPLANATORY

OF THE

PRINCIPLES, OBLIGATIONS AND RESOURCES,

OF THE

CATHOLIC RELIGION:

TRANSLATED FROM

La Doctrine Chrétienne par LHOMOND.

BY THE REV. JAMES APPLETON.

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Advertisement to the Reader.

LA DOCTRINE CHRÉTIENNE, of which the following sheets is a translation, was first published about 20 years ago; and, since that period, it has gone through six editions. The Clergy of France, in their Assembly at Paris, praised, thanked, and rewarded its Author, for producing a work equally adapted for the instruction and edification of youth as for those of riper years.

The English version of this admired work has been hitherto entitled THEOPHILUS, or THE PUPIL INSTRUCTED; but it has been judged expedient to adopt the present title, as rendering it more conformable to that of the French original.

20 JY 63

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND AND HONORABLE

THOMAS TALBOT.

AS my legitimate Superior in matters of faith, and the benevolent Protector of innocence and youth, to no other person, with greater propriety, can I address this publication. The design of it is to explain a doctrine, the steady practice of which has principally contributed to render your character so justly estimable. The support of Religion and the propagation of Virtue have been your unwearied pursuits through a life rich in merit. An attempt, therefore, to serve a cause, the first object of your wishes, however imperfect the execution, cannot fail of your patronage. Encouraged by this reflection, I undertook with less diffidence the charge intrusted to me; and, emboldened by the same, I here respectfully present you with the fruit of my labors. I have only to regret that it is so little deserving of the confidence reposed in me. The defects, however, I know you will be ready

to excuſe, in conſideration of the will and intention, that directed it. On this confidence I reſt: happy in the opportunity of thus publicly expreſſing the grateful ſenſe I entertain of being honored with your friendſhip, and of making known the reſpect and unfeigned eſteem, with which I ſhall ever remain,

My Lord,

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

MOST OBEDIENT,

AND DEVOTED HUMBLE SERVANT,

JAMES APPLETON.

Chillington, September 1, 1794.

THE PREFACE.

SUCH is the importance of Religion, whether we conſider it's influence in regard to this preſent life, or contemplate it's conſequences in reſpect to a future ſtate, that it can neither be too well known to the community at large, nor too much expounded by thoſe, whom the diſpenſations of Providence have appointed to teach it. Wherefore, with a deſign to extend the knowledge of a ſubject of ſuch moment, and in particular to convey to youth an information ſo eſſential to them, I have preſumed in the following lectures to offer an illuſtration of this heavenly ſcience.

Nor perhaps is it needleſs. We are uſually initiated in the elements of Religion at a time, when unable to fathom it's depth. When we grow up, we look with contempt upon the inſtructions, given at catechiſm, as ſuited only to children: and when matured with years, either the avocations of buſineſs, or the allurements of diſſipation incapacitate, or indiſpoſe us, for any ſerious attention to what concerns us ſo nearly. Thus, as we make our entrance into the world, unprepared for it's perils, but with a ſuperficial acquaintance of what alone can be our ſafe-guard, ſo we too quickly become the dupes of it's fatal illuſions, and too generally continue ſlaves to ignorance and vice.

To obviate ſo great an evil, or at leaſt to give a check to it's overbearing prevalence, no exertion ſhould be ſpared. For what, alas, is man, without the aſſiſtance of Religion! To ſay nothing of futurity, the conſideration of which I am willing for a while to ſuſpend, let us ſee what he is, when diveſted of Religion, in regard to ſociety and his ſublunary ſtate. In this reſpect even, could we doubt the ſad depravity and the ruinous tendency of his natural diſpoſitions, we need but caſt an eye on the cataſtrophe of France. Diſtinguiſhed by their adherence to the duties of religion, it's now devoted natives were once as remarkable for a reſpectful attachment to their conſtituted powers; and happy in both regards. But no ſooner has infidelity, diſguiſed under the inſulted appellation of Philoſophy, contaminated their principles, than, together with the throne of Religion, ignominiouſly hurled over, they trample with indignation on the long adored ſceptre of eſtabliſhed authority. To order then ſucceeds anarchy, to a regular government confuſion, to civiliſation a ſtate of ſavage nature, to ſecurity rapine, confiſcation and murder; in a word, to happineſs complete, as far as mortality would allow, miſery hitherto unparallelled in the annals of hiſtory. Such are the dreadful conſequences of the influence of infidelity, in regard even to this preſent life; ſuch wretched man, when untutored by Religion.

But let us not ſtop here. Having curſorily glanced over the horrors of this ſcene, and, with an eye big with the tear of ſympathetic compaſſion, contemplated briefly the diſtreſſes of our fellow-creatures, let us go a ſtep further, and draw the natural inference. The want of Religion, has brought to the verge of ruin one of the moſt potent, the

moſt

moſt enlightened, and the moſt refined nations in Europe; not to mention the deſtruction entailed upon individuals. Of what import is it, therefore, even as to the concerns of this world, to be acquainted with it's documents and to live up to it's dictates! It uniformly inculcates obedience to ſuperiors, charity for our brethren and juſtice towards all: virtues, that are the ſupporters of order and the bonds of ſociety. To neglect it then is the bane of whatever can be dear to us, or eſtimable in this life: to follow and adhere to it the ſource of all the happineſs to be expected here below. Let us give to this reflection it's full and juſt weight. And ſhould this publication accidentally be ſeen by any, who diſſent from the tenets herein otherwiſe delivered, let me recommend at leaſt to their notice the foregoing obſervation. For, independently of differences and the partialities of controverſy, the above-mentioned is the purport of Religion in general, and the encomium it merits on motives merely human. But, if we lift our eyes upwards, and view the rewards and puniſhments, this ſame religion holds out for that eternity, which it opens to us, we ſhall want no other proof to be convinced of it's immenſe importance. A ſyſtem, that enſures an everlaſting retribution, ſpeaks too plainly for itſelf, to need a further advocate.

Wherefore, to engrave it more deeply on the tablet of the mind, it is proper to preſent it under every form likely to elucidate and explain it. Catechiſms and ſermons are the uſual means employed to accompliſh this purpoſe. But experience evinces that they are, both of them, defective in attaining the wiſhed-for object. The catechiſtical information is conveyed at a time, when the feeble underſtanding

cannot

cannot ſoar to ſuch heights. Sermons are partial, and confined to particulars. Something more ſeemed, therefore, requiſite: ſome plan of inſtruction, which, while comprehenſive as to the matter, might be conciſe in point of method; and while accomodated to youth, might bear the peruſal of maturer years. Should the contents of the following pages be found to anſwer this end, I ſhall reſt ſatisfied with the reflection of having contributed my mite to the ſolid happineſs of ſociety.

The work is originally French; a precious remnant of the piety of that juſtly reſpected clergy. For the ſubſtance then, of the matter, detailed in this volume, I am indebted to the labors of a learned and zealous foreigner. But having propoſed, at the outſet, to adapt this publication to the benefit of my countrymen, I have ſo much deviated from him, both as to form and expreſſion; I have made ſo free, on the one ſide, in omitting what I thought irrelevant, and in adding on the other, what I judged more conducive to this view, that it cannot be deemed a tranſlation; and I have ſtyled it, what it is entitled to, a work taken from the French. *Let it be termed what it may, however, if it has but the effect to propagate the knowledge and the practice of Religion, I ſhall be fully content: truſting that a candid public will be indulgent to an undertaking, which the ſole deſire of ſerving them induced me to engage in.*

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PART I.

THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGION.

Bleſſed is the man, whom thou ſhalt inſtruct, O Lord! and ſhalt teach him thy law. Ps. xciii, 12.

TO know religion is Man's greateſt intereſt, and to apply himſelf to the ſtudy of it his firſt obligation. In your more tender years, my dear Theophilus, you were introduced to an acquaintance with its rudiments and principles. But the leſſons, you then were taught, were adapted to your capacity and proportioned to your weakneſs. Now, however, as reaſon begins to open, and to give a biaſs to your judgment, a more extenſive elucidation of this important ſubject becomes eſſentially requiſite.

With this view, I purpoſe to ſet before you, in the following lectures, the documents of Chriſtianity in a new and intereſting light. No longer content with merely propoſing the tenets of your faith, I will endeavour to unfold to you the ſolid and deciſive motives, upon which your aſſent to thoſe tenets muſt be founded. While I ſhew you the rules, that religion preſcribes, I will point out the propriety and wiſdom, on which they are conſtituted. And while I expoſe the treaſures of grace, that are laid open to you by faith, I will try to make you ſenſible of their ineſtimable value.

Two things contribute to make this undertaking peculiarly uſeful in your preſent circumſtances. The firſt of theſe is the corruption, in this regard, of what is uſually termed the world; or that aſſemblage of mankind, into which you are about to enter. You will there meet with thoſe, who do not heſitate to blaſpheme what they are totally ignorant of: who dare to weigh the word of God in the ſcales of erring reaſon: who treat as vulgar prejudices the moſt reſpectable and certain truths. If, unfortunately, circumſtances will not always permit you to avoid their ſociety, you will at leaſt be ſupplied with proofs, to oppoſe to their ſeductive errors. And, above all things, I warn you not to be dazzled by the glare of irreligious ſophiſtry; not to miſtake blaſphemy for reaſon, nor ridicule for argument. On ſuch occaſions, recall the principles you firſt imbibed; and ground your-

ſelf

ſelf therein, by frequently reading ſome of the many excellent authors, who are not wanting in any language, that give to this momentous ſubject its full energy and preciſion. The better informed you are, the more you will be ſtrengthened in the tenets of your faith: and the more ſeriouſly you apply to the ſtudy of religion, the more clearly will you perceive in it the marks of the Divinity.

The ſecond reaſon, and which adds a ſtill greater weight to the utility of my preſent attempt, is the illuſion of your paſſions, of which, ere it be long, you will feel the impulſive tumult. The heart diſordered, a mental darkneſs ſucceeds, which clouds the underſtanding, and dims it's ſight. Whatever thwarts our inclinations we ſee with falſe optics: and this is particularly the caſe with religion, which is at war with all our paſſions. Conſult them not then, I entreat you, in an affair of ſuch importance; nor ever let the deſire of gratifying them prevail on you to forſake the truth. So ſtrongly intereſted as they are, prudence forbids you to liſten to them, where the iſſue may prove ſo fatal.

If you adhere faithfully to this advice, there is no doubt but you will preſerve the precious treaſure of faith. For the two chief ſources of infidelity are ignorance and depravity. We may admire, perchance, the depth of knowledge, the brilliancy of talents and the ſuperiority of genius, that are ſometimes found in thoſe, who are uſually

called freethinkers. But it is not leſs true that theſe very perſons, ſo converſant in human ſciences, are equally ignorant in that of religion. In general, their acquaintance with this ſubject goes no further than the inſtructions, received in their childhood, of which the traces, originally but faint, are very ſoon eraſed. In proceſs of time, they contract a contempt for this kind of learning, as infinitely beneath them; and from that time forward, not one ſingle hour of ſerious application do they employ upon this ſtudy. Thus it is with ſome: while others know nothing of religion, but through the medium of writings, as licentious as they are impious. Their ſole acquaintance is with the blaſphemous calumnies, by which it is vilified; and which have taught them to become incredulous, before they knew what it was to believe.

Such people as theſe know nothing of that religion, which is ſo worthy of the Deity, ſo adapted to the wants of man, and ſo eſſential to his happineſs. They know nothing of that admirable diſtribution of its different parts, which connect the whole; nor of that perfect harmony between the old and the new teſtament, which renders religion as venerable for its antiquity, as it is ſublime in its doctrine. Hence, a wide range is opened for the operation of the paſſions. Religion, only imperfectly underſtood, oppoſes but a feeble barrier to their impetuous violence. From doubting, at firſt, a doctrine, which combats their love of pleaſure,

ſure, they conclude by throwing off the yoke of faith, and with it, that of virtue.

To remedy ſo great an evil, it will readily occur to you that it is neceſſary the youthful mind ſhould be more fully enlightened, both as to the principles of religion, and the ſolid grounds of faith. For a knowledge of religion, while it did away one cauſe of incredulity, that of ignorance, would diminiſh the influence of the other, depravity; by inſtructing the mind to love and to fear the Supreme Being. But if, in ſpite of theſe advantages, a young man ſhould be ſo deluded, as to yield to the force of paſſion, there would ſtill be a reſource left him, in the midſt of his extravagancies. The inſtructions already received, aided by the reproaches of an uneaſy and cenſuring conſcience, would inceſſantly operate to reclaim him to his duty; and a ray of hope would remain to his friends of ſeeing him, ſome time or other at leaſt, reſtored to the path of virtue.

Apply yourſelf then in earneſt, my dear child, to the ſtudy of religion. Engrave its ſaving documents deeply on your underſtanding, and ſtill more deeply on your heart. And while, with a laudable ardor, you endeavour to advance in the attainment of human knowledge, forget not that your chief, your moſt eſſential ſtudy ought to be that of religion, on which depends your eternal deſtiny.

O God! give us a true reliſh for this heavenly ſcience, and a fervent deſire of improving therein:

Give thy bleſſing to our endeavours, by the ſweet effuſion of thy grace. Enlighten the darkneſs of our underſtanding, by the knowledge of thy law: and ſoften the obduracy of our hearts, by the unction of its dictates. Give us that docility of mind, which may ſubject our reaſon to faith, and the perverſeneſs of our nature to the love of thy ſacred precepts. With this diſpoſition, even thy little ones become wiſe; a reſemblance to whom thou haſt aſſured us we muſt bear, if we hope to learn thy law, and to inherit thy kingdom.

LECTURE I.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

He, that cometh to God, muſt believe that he is. Heb. xi. 6.

IS there a God then? Yes, my dear Theophilus, there certainly is: and this, the moſt important of all truths, you were originally taught in the firſt leſſons of your childhood. However, to retrace the impreſſions then made upon you, and to ſtrike them ſtill deeper, I will here recapitulate the proofs, at that time offered to you, of this main article; on which, as on a ſolid baſis, reſts the whole fabric of religion

Every thing, both without and within you, atteſts that there is a God. Lift up your eyes to the

the heavens, and view the magnificent ſcene, that is there preſented to you; the immenſe canopy of the vaulted firmament, thickly ſet with ſhining orbs; eſpecially the ſun, whoſe vivific ſplendor rules the day, and the moon, whoſe milder influence enlivens the night. Obſerve the regular motion of theſe majeſtic bodies, with their unerring ſteadineſs in their ſtated courſes; and, in conſequence thereof, the uninterrupted ſucceſſion of the ſeaſons, and the ſure return of night and day. To what ſhall we aſcribe this invariable order, unleſs to the agency of a God, no leſs powerful than wiſe?

Turn, now, your eyes downwards, and ſee the wonders, which the earth exhibits. Behold the vaſt profuſion of animals, of different kinds, that ſtock its paſtures; the infinite variety of trees, plants, and flowers, that decorate its ſurface; the innumerable ſhoals of fiſh, that inhabit its waters; and tell me who but a God could be their author? Can they be the work of man? Not all the ingenuity of the whole human race is able to give animation to a ſingle fly. Shall we attribute them to chance? But ſuppoſe I was to tell you that the city of London, with its environs, was the work of chance; that the materials, of which it is compoſed, were brought thither by accident, and fortuitouſly arranged in the manner, in which they now appear, would you think me worthy of belief? Rather, would you not conſider me as a madman, for entertaining an opinion ſo inconſiſtent with

reaſon? Extend this reflection further, and apply it to the univerſe. You will need no other proof to be convinced of the wild folly of a ſyſtem ſo extravagant.

Finally, Theophilus, contemplate yourſelf; and, in the firſt place, your body. This you will find a work of admirable conſtruction: a work, in which the ſkill of the artificer is no leſs apparent than his power; and in which, if the plan denotes a Superior wiſdom, the execution atteſts an Almighty hand. It is then the work of a God; that is, of a being of infinite power and intelligence. For this, and no other, is the idea, which this term conveys. And, indeed, to whom elſe ſhall we aſſign it? If you tell me to nature; I anſwer that either the word *nature* is a name without a meaning; or, if it imports any thing, it is that all-wiſe and powerful influence, which is the Divinity itſelf.

Secondly, beſides the body, you have alſo a ſoul. And this ſoul is not compoſed of matter like the body; for it *thinks*, of which matter is incapable. Yet this ſoul, though altogether ſpiritual, is united to your material body; and that by a connexion ſo intimate, as to partake of all its pleaſures, and to ſympathiſe in all its pains. And whence this ſurpriſing union of two natures ſo diſſimular, this wonderful correſpondence between what to us might ſeem incompatible, but from the hand of an Almighty artiſt, who underſtands his own works?

An

An additional proof of the exiſtence of God are thoſe ſentiments of joy and ſorrow, which you involuntarily experience. Was your mind at your own diſpoſal, there is no room to doubt what ſtate you would wiſh to keep it in. But ſince it is not ſo, you find yourſelf expoſed to a perpetual viciſſitude of temper; which compels you to own that you are not maſter of yourſelf; but that you depend on a Sovereign ruler, who diſpoſes of you as he pleaſes. And who is this but God? Hence, if any accident ſurpriſes, or danger alarms you, you call out, and that unknowingly, *O God!* an exclamation, ſays Tertullian, which is not the effect of reflection, but the acknowledgment of a ſoul, that naturally feels the exiſtence of a ſupreme Being, and its own dependance on him.

It is certain then, Theophilus, that we bear in our perſons the impreſſion of the Deity: an impreſſion ſtampt upon us in the moſt legible characters; an impreſſion as univerſal, as it is ſtrongly marked, and which the moſt ſavage people have at all times confeſſed. We find nations deſtitute of civil eſtabliſhments, of inſtitutions, of laws, and of every ſpecies of ſocial ties. But none do we find, in which the notion of a God does not prevail. On this head, the conſent of mankind has ever been general. However different their conceptions as to his external form or attributes, all agree in admitting the exiſtence of a Being, the Arbiter of the univerſe and the object of its worſhip. Nor is it

poſſible

poſſible to aſcribe this univerſal conſent to any human combination. The diſtance of time and place, and the contrariety of diſpoſitions will not allow the ſuppoſition. The ſole finger of the Creator, who originally imprinted this idea, can account for its general prevalence throughout every age and climate.

Yes, O God! thou haſt ſtampt all thy works ſo viſibly with the impreſſion of thy grandeur, that the moſt ignorant cannot miſtake it. The heavens announce thy glory, and the firmament thy power. The wide extended ſky, with the luminaries, that adorn it; the earth, rich with verdure and inceſſant vegetation; the fathomleſs abyſs of waters, ſo obedient to thy word; all with one accord proclaim the wonders of thy omnipotence. Of this the fainteſt dawn of reaſon is ſufficient to convince us. Never ſuffer us then, we entreat thee, to permit this ſacred light to be obſcured by our paſſions. Preſerve our hearts untainted; and we ſhall ever ſee thee in thy works; for a corrupted heart alone can poſſibly overlook thee. May we uſe thy creatures as ſteps, to aſcend to the contemplation of thyſelf. This, my God! I will ſtrive to do; that whilſt I behold them, I may in them behold, and reſpectfully adore thee, their ſovereign Creator.

The practical Inference.

That we muſt contemplate God in his creatures.

LECTURE

LECTURE II.

ON THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praiſed, and of his greatneſs there is no end. Ps. cxliv. 3.

SO tranſcendently great is God, and ſo limited our underſtanding, that it is not poſſible for us to conceive a juſt idea of him. The knowledge, that reaſon and even faith afford us of him, is at beſt but faint and imperfect. Such, however, as it is, Theophilus, it ſuffices for this life, and merits all your attention.

No higher conception can be framed of the Deity, than that, which he gives us of himſelf, when he ſays; *I am, who am*; Exod. iii. 14. An idea the moſt ſublime; and which beſpeaks whatever can be imagined great of him. *I am, who am.* As if he had ſaid, I am the being of beings; the ſource and principle of whatever exiſts, from whom every thing elſe derives its origin: whatever you ſee around you draws its exiſtence from me, and holds it at my pleaſure. I alone am ſelf-exiſtent, independent, and immutable. Hence it follows that God poſſeſſes all perfections, and that in an unlimited degree. Let us purſue this idea, and endeavour to develop it.

Firſt then, God is *a ſpirit*, that is, a being purely intellectual, without body, ſhape, or colour. He can have no reſemblance to any thing we ſee; be-

cauſe

cauſe whatever ſtrikes our ſenſes is material; which is wholly incompatible with the notion, we juſtly form, of a being infinitely perfect. Our ſoul alone is like to, and can give us an idea of him. This alſo is a ſpiritual being, as God is; but with a diſparity, that muſt be noticed; viz. that there is an infinite diſtance between a Supreme intelligence, ſuch as God, and a created one, ſuch as our ſoul. The powers of our ſoul are contracted and imperfect: thoſe of the Deity extend to all things: his thoughts are as much exalted above the thoughts of man, as are the heavens above the earth.

Secondly, God is *eternal*. He was prior to all created objects; for they are the work of his hands. He was prior to all time; for from him it has its beginning. The time was, when the heavens and the earth had no exiſtence: and the time will come, when they ſhall both of them periſh. Not ſo with God, however. As he never had a beginning, ſo he will never have an end. Before the birth of ages, God exiſted in himſelf; and nothing was there beſides him. *Before the mountains were formed*, ſays the inſpired penman, *and before the foundations of the earth were balanced, thou waſt, O Lord! Thou reacheſt from eternity to eternity. The works of thy hands ſhall periſh; but thou remaineſt for ever; and thy years ſhall never fail.*

Thirdly, God is *omnipotent*. So he ſtyles himſelf in the ſacred writings. His power knows no bounds.

bounds. Whatever he pleaſes he can do; even give exiſtence to things, that before had none; as he has to the world we live in, and could to a thouſand more, with equal eaſe and facility. *He calls things, that are not*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *as if they were*; and they obey his awful ſummons. For nothing can withſtand or control his Almighty power.

Fourthly, God is *independent*: for on whom ſhould he depend, who is the Sovereign Lord of all things? We, indeed, as his creatures, depend continually on him; and this our dependance is truly univerſal: for, without him, we can do nothing. Nay more, without his ſupport, we ſhould inſtantly relapſe into that ſtate of non-exiſtence, from which he originally drew us. But God depends on nothing. The primary cauſe of all other beings, from himſelf alone he holds his own. The inexhauſtible ſource of all good, every perfection is inherent in him, and he imparts them, as he pleaſes. Sovereignly happy, he ſuffices for himſelf, and ſtands in need of no one. The abſolute Maſter of all nature, he has neither ſuperior nor equal.

Fifthly, God is *immutable*. What he is, he always was, and always will be. *I am the Lord*, he ſays of himſelf, *and cannot change*. Man never continues in a fixed and permanent ſtate. For, on one ſide, his body, expoſed to the alterations of the different periods of life, paſſes ſucceſſively from vigor to imbecility, from health to diſeaſe, from life to death. Whilſt on the other, his mind is often

often varying, whether from inconſtancy or conviction: what yeſterday he courted, to day he contemns; and what to day he diſlikes, to morrow he may be enamored with. But in God there is no viciſſitude, nor the fainteſt ſhadow of inſtability. *His will*, ſays the Prophet, *is eternal, and his thoughts are unchangeable.*

Laſtly, God is *infinite*: for neither his eſſence, nor his attributes admit of any limits. In him are concentred all poſſible perfections, and each of them he poſſeſſes in an infinite degree. Thus, he is not only juſt, but infinitely juſt; not only holy, but infinitely holy, &c. For as the number of his attributes is unbounded, ſo is the extent of them illimitable.

O God! how great art thou, and how deſerving of our homage! How exalted are thy perfections beyond our comprehenſion! But ſhall we therefore ceaſe to inveſtigate and to admire them? No. For why haſt thou given us an underſtanding, but to ſtudy, and to contemplate them? Why a tongue, but to announce, and to publiſh what we know of them? Our heart tells us inceſſantly that it was made but to love thee. For thou art infinitely good, as well as infinitely wiſe: not leſs amiable for thy beauty, than formidable by thy power. O inexhauſtible ſource of bounty! from thee alone flows every good. O Supreme and infinite Deity! We can neither give a juſt idea of thee to others, nor comprehend thee ourſelves. For what is man, to pretend

tend to praiſe thee? A vile reptile of the earth, to preſume to ſound the depth of thy adorable perfections? At the ſight of thy glorious majeſty, what better can I do, than, proſtrate at thy feet, adore thee in ſilent rapture? This mute and reſpectful homage will more exalt thy grandeur, than all the elogies and praiſes, that my unworthy tongue can utter.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt humble ourſelves before God.

LECTURE III.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

In his hands are all the ends of the Earth. Ps. xciv. 4.

GOD is in heaven, on earth, and in all places whatſoever; and this his univerſal preſence is, by Divines, termed *ubiquity*; that is, an unconfined exiſtence without bounds or limitation.

The ſacred writings, in almoſt every page, inculcate this important truth. *Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, ſaith the Lord?* Yes, ſays St. Paul: for *in him we breathe we move and we exiſt.* Go where we will, we ſhall always find him preſent. For *whither ſhall I fly*, exclaims David, to avoid thy ſight, O God? *If I aſcend to heaven thou art there. If I deſcend to the loweſt poſſible abyſs, thou* ſtill *art there.* Whichever way I turn myſelf, it is thy hand

hand that guides, thy power that ſuſtains me. Yes, my dear Theophilus, it is certain that God is in all things, and that all things are in God: that he animates, gives motion to, and ſupports every being. It is certain that we live continually in his preſence: that he hears all our words, and ſees all our actions: that he even penetrates into the inmoſt receſſes of our hearts, and is witneſs to all our thoughts and latent inclinations. No obſcurity ſo great, as to conceal us from his ſearching eyes. *I have ſaid*, continues the pious king, perhaps *darkneſs* may prevent his ſeeing me. But, O how vain! for the moſt obſcure and gloomy *night* is as the cleareſt *day-light* to him.

No ſtronger proof need we require of the divine omnipreſence, than the teſtimony of our own heart. For whence that remorſe, which troubles us, upon the commiſſion of any crime, however ſecret, or concealed? Whence thoſe keen and ſevere reproaches, with which our conſcience then diſquiets us? In vain does the ſinner ſtrive to ſmother and to ſilence them. The piercing voice of that internal cenſor compels him to attend. Gladly could he wiſh to fly from his own heart, and to eſcape, as I may ſay, from himſelf. But, go where he will, the inviſible judge, whom he carries in his breaſt, follows him, and upbraids him with his wickedneſs. And who is this watchful cenſor? what that voice ſo clamorous? who that perſecuting judge, from whom darkneſs itſelf cannot protect

tect him, but the incorruptible truth, the eternal juſtice of the Deity, the aſſured witneſs of all we do.

Never then forget, Theophilus, that God is always with you, and that you, at no time, are alone. Remember that, however removed you may ſuppoſe yourſelf from the obſervation of mankind, you ſtill are in the ſight of an inviſible witneſs, whoſe eye is never off you. No idea can be more effectual to preſerve you from ſin. The recollection of the divine preſence will blunt the arrows of your infernal enemy, and foil his attempts upon you.—For how can you dare to ſin, when ſenſible you cannot do it, but under the immediate inſpection of your God? Can you be ſo inſolent, as to commit that in his preſence, which you would be afraid to do in the face of an ordinary ſuperior.

Keep God, therefore, *ever in view*; as formerly Toby adviſed his ſon. And, if, at any time, you find yourſelf ſolicited to ſin, anſwer with St. Auſtin; "Shew me the place, where God will not ſee me; "till then moleſt me not: for to offend him before "his eyes, is a degree of raſhneſs and temerity, "which I have not yet attained to."

O my God! thou art every where preſent, for *the heavens and the earth are filled with the majeſty of thy glory*. How inſenſible then muſt I have been, to have lived ſo long without thinking of thee! to have paid no attention to thee, in whom alone I exiſted. Alas, my God! I confeſs that this forget-

fulneſs of thy ſacred preſence has been the cauſe of all my ſins. If already I have ſo often offended thee, it was becauſe I was unmindful that thou wert continually with me. And, if ſtill I commit many faults, it is becauſe, in my careleſſneſs, I frequently loſe ſight of thee. Henceforth, however, I will be more attentive to thee. I will walk in thy preſence, and bear before my eyes this ſalutary reflection. This ſhall be my ſupport in the time of temptation, and my comfort in the hour of ſorrow. This ſhall rouſe my languor, animate my tepidity, and encourage me to perſevere in the faithful diſcharge of all my duties.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt be mindful of the preſence of God.

LECTURE IV.

ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

His wiſdom reacheth from end to end mightily; and ordereth all things ſweetly. Wis. viii. 1.

THINK not, Theophilus, that God, after having made his creatures, leaves them to themſelves, or abandons them to chance. Since he has deigned to create them, he cannot be ſaid to demean himſelf, by paying regard to their welfare.—Nor can any power, inferior to that, which firſt gave

gave them birth, be competent to maintain them in due harmony and order. With watchful care, therefore, he continues to preſide over them; and this vigilant attention we denominate his *Providence*. For as to chance, it is a mere ſound. He directs, and governs all things; and without his command, or at leaſt his permiſſion, nothing certainly does happen. Whatever good is done, is the effect of his command, and what he both wills and rewards; whatever evil, the conſequence of his permiſſion only, and what he forbids and puniſhes: and yet he condeſcends to tolerate it; both becauſe he is unwilling to trench upon our liberty; as alſo, becauſe he is able, whenever it ſo pleaſes him, to draw good from evil itſelf.

The ſacred volumes throughout, atteſt the influence of God's providence: nor is there any thing more ſtriking in them, than their perpetual attention to repreſent every event as the effect of his interference. While the Jewiſh people continued faithful to him, he heaped his bleſſings on them, and crowned them with ſucceſs. But no ſooner did they forſake him, and violate his law, than puniſhment and misfortune overtook their infidelity.

Nor does this divine ſuperintendance extend only to empires, and the weighty rule of nations. The moſt diminutive of beings is equally an object of its care; and it is no leſs attentive to the welfare of each individual, than if that ſole individual exiſted in the world. *Not a ſparrow falls to the ground,*

ſays Chriſt, *without the direction of your heavenly Father*; *who numbers the hairs of your head*, and diſ poſes of them, as he wills.

From among the many examples, which the Scriptures afford of this interpoſition of the Deity, in the direction of human affairs, I will ſingle out two. The firſt is that of Joſeph; who being ſold by his brethren, and conducted into Egypt, is there loaded with irons, and caſt into priſon. *But God*, ſays the holy text, *deſcended with him, into the dungeon, and did not forſake him in his chains*. Some time after, the perſecuted Joſeph is releaſed, with honor, from his confinement, and placed at the head of the Egyptian kingdom, which he had entered as a ſlave. In diſcovering himſelf to his brethren, he tells them, *I came hither, not by your machinations, but by the order of the Almighty*; thus aſcribing to the will of providence, what appeared to be the work of man only. A ſecond inſtance is that of Moſes. Yet an infant, he is expoſed by the command of Pharoah, on the banks of the river Nile. By the guidance of providence, the daughter of this ſame king comes to the very place, where the babe was laid. Touched with compaſſion, ſhe orders it to be taken up, and conveyed to the palace itſelf, where ſhe rears it with all the tenderneſs, that could be expected from a mother. And who then was it, that ſo fortunately conducted her to the relief of this helpleſs infant? Who, that infuſed thoſe ſentiments of pity, and inſpired her with the deſign of adopting

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it for her own? Who, I ſay, but God, intending this child, in time, to be the deliverer of his people?

But is it neceſſary, to have recourſe to hiſtory, Theophilus, to convince you there is a providence? Does not the regular growing and ripening of the corn, of the graſs and of the various productions of the earth ſufficiently atteſt it? And does not the unfailing renewal of what is required for their ſubſiſtence, ſhew the ſolicitude of a parent, ever regardful of his childrens welfare, and attentive to their wants.

Nor vainly imagine that this care of his creatures can give him any trouble, or intrude upon his reſt. To a wiſdom and power, infinite as his, every thing is eaſy. Unlike to man, whoſe contracted powers oblige him to neglect things of ſmall moment, that he may attend to the more important, his comprehenſive reach embraces every thing. It is this, that gives fertility to the earth, and animation to all nature. Even inſenſible things, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *fire, hail, winds and ſtorms obey his voice*, and execute his will: for it is at his command that the clouds overſpread the face of the heavens, and the rain refreſhes the earth. Nor yet again doubt of his providence, becauſe he ſometimes ſuffers miſery to be the portion of the virtuous, while the wicked roll in plenty, and riot in delights. If he permits the juſt man to be afflicted in this world, it is to make proof of his ſincerity, and to reward

him magnificently in the next. For he knows that theſe ſhort and tranſitory ſufferings will hereafter enſure to him an unfading wreath of glory.

The eſtabliſhment of this conſolatory article, brings with it two obligations. Firſt, as there is a providence, we are bound to reſign ourſelves implicitly to its guidance. We muſt be grateful to its bounty, for the favors it confers upon us; and ſubmiſſive to its correction, when it thinks proper to chaſtiſe us; in adverſity, as in proſperity, adoring equally its diſpenſations. Secondly, we muſt confide in providence; and patiently expect from the hand of the Almighty whatever our neceſſities, whether temporal or ſpiritual, oblige us to aſk of him. *Behold the birds of the air*, ſays Chriſt; *they neither ſow, nor reap, nor do they gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? See the lillies of the field: they labor not, nor do they ſpin.* Nevertheleſs, *not Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed like one of them. Now, if God ſo clothe the graſs of the field*, how much more care will he take of you, who are his well beloved children? To diffide in his parental kindneſs would be to offer him a groſs affront.

O my God! I believe that nothing can happen to me, but by thy order or permiſſion; and I therefore reſign myſelf entirely to the guidance of thy providence. Thou knoweſt what is for my good much better than I myſelf do. Thou diſcerneſt my wants and my inability to help them. Diſpoſe of me,

me, in all things, according to thy pleaſure; for no other wiſh ought I to have but the accompliſhment of thy will. In pain as in eaſe, in ſickneſs as in health, I will bleſs thy ſacred name. Thou art my Creator and my Father. Wilt thou abandon a child, who puts his confidence in thee? No, my God! Whilſt I truſt in thee, nothing in life can hurt me: Every thing, on the contrary will turn to my advantage. Whatever I may ſuffer, I will not regard the hand of man, whom thou uſeſt as thy inſtrument; but the ordinance of thy will, which ſeeks only my welfare; and, perfectly reſigned to thy divine diſpenſations, I will ſubmit to afflictions, as the means, which thou employeſt to effect my ſalvation. Hitherto, thy providence has led me as it were, by the hand; and the whole courſe of my life bears witneſs to the benevolence of thy paternal attention. Never then let me be ſo ungrateful as to diſtruſt thy loving kindneſs, to which I ſtand indebted for ſuch accumulated favors.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt implicitly reſign ourſelves to the will of the Almighty.

LECTURE V.

ON THE NECESSITY OF RELIGION.

Fear the Lord, and give him honor. Apoc. iv. 7.

RELIGION conſiſts in rendering to God that Sovereign homage, which is his indubitable right, as the Supreme Being. And this Sovereign honor is due to him from us, as well on account of his infinite perfections, as for the innumerable bleſſings, we receive at his hands. The greatneſs, the juſtice, the power of God are infinite: Our duty therefore requires of us to fear and to reſpect him. His goodneſs is alike unbounded, and this challenges our love and our warmeſt attachment.—Yes, my Theophilus, it is God, you know, that made you. It is from his beneficent hand you hold whatever you poſſeſs. Every thing, you have, whether as to ſoul or body, is the gratuitous gift of his inexhauſtible bounty. Nor does his affection ſtop here. What he deſigns for you, in the next life, infinitely ſurpaſſes whatever he gives you in this: his intention is there to crown you with happineſs everlaſting.

See then how much you owe to God, and what, in conſequence, your duty calls for. Your obligations to him are, without compariſon, greater than thoſe of a child to a parent. And what would you think of a child, who to a parent the moſt affectionate, ſhould make no other return, than

than that of indifference and coldneſs? Would you not juſtly abhor him, as an unnatural monſter? Nor let us idly imagine that God is ſo far raiſed above us, as to be unconcerned about our honoring him. It is true, he does not want our homage. But, at the ſame time, he is juſt; and, of courſe, likes whatever is conformable to reaſon and good order; and it is certainly agreeable to both that the creature ſhould revere and pay acknowledgment to its Creator. God, therefore, exacts our ſervice, not as a matter that can be any ways advantageous to himſelf; but as a duty moſt eſſentially incumbent upon us. For can it be ſuppoſed that, having endued man with the power of knowing and loving him, he does not require him to comply with ſo important an obligation?

This may ſuffice to convince you that we, on our part owe to God, and that God, on his, demands of us a religious obedience and worſhip. It remains only to point out to you its nature and qualities. Firſt, then, it muſt be *interior*, that is, we muſt know him and love him. It is in this knowledge and love of the Deity that conſiſts the very eſſence of religion; nor can we honor him, as we ought, without this homage of the mind and heart. *For God*, ſays Chriſt, *is a ſpirit*, whom *we muſt adore in ſpirit and in truth*. Secondly, this worſhip muſt be *exterior*; that is, ſuch as may outwardly manifeſt our internal diſpoſitions. Our bodies, as well as our ſouls, are the work of the great Creator. It is juſt therefore

therefore they ſhould unite in paying him their tribute; and that the body, as well as the mind, ſhould teſtify its acknowledgment. Were we beings purely intellectual, our religious worſhip might be wholly ſpiritual. But compoſed, as we are, of both a body and a ſoul, the work would be imperfect, if the body had not its ſhare in it. Nor, indeed, is it poſſible that it ſhould not. The ſlighteſt attention to ourſelves will ſatisfy us that the mind is no ſooner affected with any ſentiment or impreſſion, than it diſcovers that impreſſion outwardly, by the geſtures of the body, which may be properly ſtyled the interpreters of its feelings. Suppoſe a man, for inſtance, penetrated with the idea of God, ſtruck with awe at the ſight of his perfections, or with a grateful confidence at the view of his bounty, would not your imagination paint him, either as humbly proſtrate in the preſence of the Divinity; or, with hands and eyes uplifted, ſinging thankfully his praiſes? Or do you not think, my dear child, that were theſe happy diſpoſitions yours, you would not manifeſt them externally, by viſible marks and tokens? Moreover, I add that the worſhip, we pay to the Deity, muſt alſo be *public*. For as men are formed to live in ſociety, it behoves them to meet together, and to adore him in common, who is the common parent of all. Without a *public* worſhip, religion muſt ſoon fall to the ground. Mutual exhortations and the edification of good example are requiſite to animate us in the practice of our duties.

Hence

Hence, from the beginning of the world, men have always been in the habit of aſſembling, to render their homage in concert to the author of their exiſtence. We find this *public* worſhip univerſally eſtabliſhed; different I allow, in manner, according to the difference of national character; but uniform in its principle, and grounded on the ſame motive, viz. the obligation of revering the Sovereign of the univerſe. For the ſame light as directs us to the knowledge of his exiſtence, diſcovers to us the neceſſity of paying him the tribute of adoration.

Thou haſt made man, O Lord! for the ſole purpoſe of thy glory; and it is a duty, indiſpenſably incumbent on him, to worſhip thee by religion. Thou haſt beſtowed my being on me for no other end, but to know, to love and to ſerve thee: whatever I have or am, I ſtand indebted to thee for it: and the voice of juſtice tells me I ought to devote it all to thee. All the faculties of my ſoul and body ſhould be occupied about thee: my underſtanding in knowing, my will in loving, and my tongue in praiſing thee. What other creature but man could render thee that homage, which thou claimeſt ſo juſtly? Without him, all nature is mute: and it is therefore his part particularly to pay thee that acknowledgment, which is due to thee from thy works. This is what thou haſt deſigned him for: ſince, having made every thing elſe for his uſe, thou enjoineſt him to refer all to thee, and to immolate to thy glory the being, thou haſt given

him.

him. I am ſenſible, O my God! that in the diſcharge of this duty conſiſts all my happineſs: for happy I cannot be, but in attaching myſelf to thee, who alone canſt ſatisfy the deſires of my heart. Thou ſource of all our good! To know thee, is the only ſcience; to love thee, the only pleaſure; and to ſerve thee, the only honor, that can be worth our purſuit.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt refer every thing to God.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE UNITY OF GOD.

I am the Lord, and there is none elſe: beſides me there is no God. Iſ. xlv. 5.

TO be ſatisfied, Theophilus, that there is but one God, and that more there cannot be, you need but reflect on the import of the word. For by this ſacred name, we underſtand a *Sovereign* being, the *Supreme* Lord and maſter of all things. Now, is it not clear that, as *Sovereign*, he can be but one? or how can he be *Supreme*, if he admits of a rival?

The attributes of God alſo manifeſt his unity. The title of *immenſe* can belong but to one: that is, to him alone, who fills all things, and out of whom there

there is nothing. The idea of a competitor is inconſiſtent with *infinite majeſty*, which poſſeſſes in itſelf the plenitude of greatneſs. The name of *omnipotent* would ill ſuit with a Being, that could be controlled by another, of equal juriſdiction.

In repeated paſſages of the Scripture, this point is preſſed upon us, in the moſt marked and expreſſive terms. *Know that I am the only God, and that there is no other beſides myſelf. I am the Lord, and there is none elſe. Let them know, who are from the riſing to the ſetting of the Sun, that there is none beſides me; for thus ſaith the Lord, who created the heavens, I am God, and there is no other.* To make this truth more evident, in the time of the old law, God allowed one only temple, for the performance of his ſervice; and one ſole altar, whereon to offer him ſacrifice.

It ſeems wonderful that a thing ſo clear ſhould ſo long have eſcaped the knowledge of antiquity; and that almoſt all the nations of the earth ſhould have unanimouſly adored a plurality of Gods. But this unaccountable blindneſs was the effect of ſin. On the creation of man, God made himſelf known to him. At that moment, man was conſcious that there was but one Supreme being, the ſource and the ſupport of every thing created. This plain and ſimple ſyſtem he tranſmitted to this offſpring, who, for ſome time, adhered to it, as a matter unqueſtionable. Tradition alone was then ſufficient to authoriſe

riſe it; and this tradition, moreover, was ſo conformable to reaſon, as to preclude all apprehenſions of its being forgotten, or obſcured. But reaſon, weakened by ſin, ſoon began to be perverted. In proportion as man loſt ſight of the view of his origin, he confounded the ideas, which he had received from his forefathers; and refuſed to adore any-thing but what he could ſee. Hence the errors of Idolatry became univerſally prevalent. The idea of the Creator being blended with that of the creature, every thing was worſhipped, in which was the appearance of extraordinary power. The firſt objects of adoration were the ſun and the moon, whoſe influence was ſo remote. To theſe ſucceeded heroes and conquerors, with all their train of devaſtation. So aſtoniſhing was the progreſs of this wide-extended evil, that the very beaſts and reptiles had their votaries and followers. Every thing was God but God himſelf: and the world, which he had formed for the manifeſtation of his power, ſeemed now to be converted into a temple of idols: and yet more: even human paſſions and vices had altars erected to them. In fine, in this deplorable ſtate of darkneſs, man blindly bent his knee to the work of his own hands. He fancied he could inſpire a log with the ſpirit of the Deity; and ſo utterly had he forgotten that God was his maker, that he imagined himſelf capable of making a God, when he pleaſed. Each different nation had its particular Deities; of which

which ſome preſided over the heavens, others over the land and waters, and a third ſort over the regions below.

An infatuation ſo aſtoniſhing cannot fail to ſurpriſe you. For you are ſufficiently informed to know that an infinite power only could give exiſtence to created nature; and that none but an infinite wiſdom could be competent to govern it. You are convinced that the order, which pervades the great ſyſtem, atteſts one ſole Creator, one individual and only Maſter; and that, with a plurality of Gods, this admirable order muſt, of courſe, be incompatible.

Nevertheleſs, this exceſs of folly was not only imputable to the groſſer and more ignorant of mankind: the moſt poliſhed and enlightened people were equally guilty of it. The Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, in point of abilities and ſcience, ſtood undoubtedly unrivalled: but in matters of Religion, they were as much in the dark, as others. Among theſe nations, oratory, poetry, philoſophy, &c. were carried ſucceſſively to the higheſt pitch of perfection: but, as to the nature of the Divinity, their ignorance was conſummate. And what would appear inconceivable, if not evinced by experience, this abſurdeſt of deluſions was not only the moſt extenſive, but the moſt incorrigible in its progreſs. Nor could mankind have ever emerged from its baneful oppreſſion, had not a ſupernatural light come in to the aſſiſtance of reaſon,

reaſon, and had not God ſpoken in perſon, and expreſsly declared in what manner he would be ſerved.

Alas! O Lord! Unleſs thou hadſt vouchſafed to diſſipate the gloom, we ourſelves ſhould now be plunged in the ſame fatal darkneſs. Bare reaſon, of itſelf, would have been as inſufficient for us, as for thoſe of our race, who have lived ignorant of thee. The uſe men made of it, for ſo many ages, but too clearly ſhews to what deluſive purpoſes we ourſelves ſhould have turned it. It's light, obſcured by ſin, would have left us, like them, under the groſſeſt of errors, and in the ignorance of what it moſt imports us to know. But thou haſt deigned to inſtruct mankind thyſelf; and to reveal to them not only the more ſimple truths, which time had obliterated, but alſo the myſteries of thy ſacred Eſſence,, and the inſcrutable deſigns of thy infinite mercy. O God! what thanks do we not owe thee, for the light of Religion, which teaches us more in the firſt leſſons of our infancy, than ever was known to all the ſages of antiquity! Receive then, our humble acknowledgments for having delivered us from ſuch blindneſs. For what a blindneſs it is to ſuppoſe a plurality of Gods! Thou, O Lord! art ſupreme, and no other can equal thee. Thou art immenſe, and filleſt every thing by thy unbounded omnipreſence. Thou art the fountain of all things, and without thee there is nothing.—Periſh then thoſe chimeras, which would impiouſly

claim

claim that homage, which is due to thee alone.—*To the king of ages, the immortal, invisible and only God, be honor and glory through the duration of time.* Amen.

The Practical Inference.

That we must be thankful to God for having called us to his light, and to the knowledge of the truth.

LECTURE VII.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE SACRED TRINITY.

There are three, who give testimony in heaven; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. John i. 5.

ALTHOUGH there is but one God, yet in this one God there are three distinct persons. For God, who is single and simple in his nature, is, nevertheless, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is not the Son; nor is the Holy Ghost either the Son or the Father.—Each of the three persons is itself, and no other; and all three together are but one and the same Divinity. This is, by no means, an article, that reason can discover: it is a mystery, which we learn from the documents of revelation.

The pages of the Scripture and the ceremonies of religion alike inculcate this fundamental truth.—

God revealed this myſtery in an evident manner, at the baptiſm of Jeſus Chriſt. For then was heard the voice of the Father, owning him publicly for his *beloved Son*; and then was ſeen the Holy Ghoſt, under the appearance of a dove, deſcending on and overſhadowing him. Chriſt himſelf declared it plainly, when he commanded his Apoſtles to baptiſe all nations, in the name *Of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*; thereby ſhewing theſe three perſons to be equal; and that, by our baptiſm, we belong to each of them. *For there are three, who give teſtimony in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt; and theſe three are one.*

This myſtery is the grand object of our faith; and there is none, to which religion ſo frequently appeals. All our prayers begin and finiſh by the invocation of the ſacred Trinity. The ſign of the croſs, which ſo often occurs in our religious ceremonies and rites, is made in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.

Thus you ſee, my dear Theophilus, that, in your ideas upon this ſubject, you muſt neither divide the Divine nature, which is but one; nor confound the perſons, who are different: that the Son is the ſame God as the Father, but not the ſame perſon: that the Holy Ghoſt alſo is the ſame God as the Father and the Son, but ſtill a different perſon. The Father is ſo called, becauſe from all eternity he begot a Son, who is the ſecond perſon of the bleſſed Trinity; and from the Father and the Son, proceeds

ceeds the Holy Ghoſt, who is the third. Theſe three perſons are not three Gods, but one God only; becauſe they have but one and the ſame Divinity, one and the ſame nature. Whence it follows that they are equal in all things; and that none of them is greater, more powerful, or more ancient than the others; ſince they have each of them the ſame greatneſs, the ſame power, the ſame eternity of exiſtence.

This is the ſubſtance of what the Deity has diſcloſed reſpecting this great myſtery; a myſtery ſo ſublime, as to defy all human reaſoning. But God, the unerring wiſdom, the infallible truth, has revealed it to us; and on the veracity of his word our faith reſts ſecure. To wiſh to fathom it would be folly: the powers of reaſon are too defective.—For, as there are objects beyond the reach of our ſight, and which, of courſe, we cannot ſee; ſo there are things impenetrable to our underſtanding, and which we are unable to comprehend.

Nor is this the caſe only in what regards the Divinity. It happens often in the works of nature even, which we never call in queſtion. For inſtance, was an Aſtrologer to tell you that the ſun is a million times larger than the earth; and that it is more than ninety-ſix millions of miles diſtant from us, your underſtanding would be at a loſs to unravel his aſſertion: you would believe it, notwithſtanding, becauſe told you by a perſon, who ought to know what he advanced; and you would natu-

rally ſuppoſe that, if you did not comprehend it, it was becauſe you were but a child. Let me tell you then, Theophilus: juſt ſo it is with all of us In things belonging to the Divine nature we all are mere children. When, hereafter, we ſhall attain the fulneſs of age, what now obſtructs our view will be removed; and we then ſhall ſee clearly what, at preſent, we can neither penetrate nor conceive. "To wiſh to ſound this myſtery," ſays St. Auſtin, " is preſumption; to believe it, true de-" votion; and to know it, the ſovereign felicity of " our future exiſtence". It ought to ſuffice, ſays the catechiſm of the Council of Trent, that God himſelf has revealed it: ſince we cannot, without folly, refuſe our aſſent to his indubitable word.

Let the perſon then, whom grace enables to believe this auguſt myſtery, entreat God to grant him a bleſſed immortality; that there, all veils being withdrawn, he may contemplate it without impediment. For as the belief of this grand myſtery renders us Chriſtians in this life; ſo the clear and perfect view of it will make us happy in the life, we tend to.

O my God! I believe, and here ſolemnly profeſs, that there is one only God, in three diſtinct perſons. I adore the Father: I adore the Son: I adore the Holy Ghoſt: and in adoring theſe three perſons, I adore one ſole and only Deity. I believe and profeſs that the Son was begotten by the Father, before the beginning of time. I believe and profeſs that

that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Father and from the Son, before the commencement of ages. I believe theſe three perſons to have one and the ſame nature, one and the ſame infinity of perfection, without any inequality. It is true, I comprehend not this wonderful myſtery: but thou, my God! haſt revealed it, and I deſire no other evidence. For my reaſon itſelf tells it me that I cannot act in a manner more conformable to it's dictates, than to ſubmit, without reſerve, to thy unerring authority. I do not, indeed, ſee what it is I believe: but this I ſee, that, to believe it, is what every conſideration binds me to: for, when thou art pleaſed to ſpeak, I have only to liſten, and reſpectfuly to aſſent. Reaſon, is I know, confined; and thy word is infallible. I ſhould even be ſurpriſed could I poſſibly conceive what thou deigneſt to reveal of thy infinite perfections: for thou wouldeſt no longer be what thou art, wert thou not incomprehenſible: nor would thy wonders deſerve that name, were they penetrable to human reaſon. Inſtead of wiſhing to ſound ſo unfathomable a myſtery, I return thee my grateful thanks for having diſcloſed to me what thou art. For what, O God! is man, that thou ſhouldeſt make thyſelf known to him? I obey the dictates of a longing hope, that I ſhall hereafter contemplate in heaven what I believe here on earth; though, in my preſent ſtate of weakneſs, above my comprehenſion.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould never pronounce theſe words, *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, but with the moſt profound reſpect.

LECTURE VIII.

ON THE CREATION.

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Gen. i. 1.

THE world, which you ſee, Theophilus, is far from being eternal: ſix thouſand years ago it did not exiſt. The proof of this is evident in the marks, that are eaſily traced, of its infancy and origin. For, in going backwards to that era, we ſee every thing beginning, arts and ſciences, kingdoms and ſtates. A more early exiſtence no fact, no monument, no hiſtory atteſts. The book, that fixes the creation of the world to the date here ſpecified, whilſt it is the moſt ancient of books, is alſo the moſt authentic and the moſt deſerving of credit. And the firſt ſentence of it tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; that is, that he made both them and whatever they contain, by his command, out of nothing. For ſuch has ever been the meaning and the conſtruction affixed to the word *creation*. God exiſted,

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at that time, alone; and there was nothing beſide himſelf. But at the inſtant he willed it, for his will was command enough, the heavens and the earth aroſe from a ſtate of nonentity, created by his word only, and for the ſole purpoſe of his glory. *God ſpoke, and every thing was made: he commanded, and the univerſe was created.*

Imagine yourſelf, my dear child, preſent at the birth of the world. With what aſtoniſhment would you have been ſtruck, on ſeeing a variety of beings preſent themſelves, in all their beauty, at each word of the Almighty! He employed, you know, ſix days in completing this great work, which he could have finiſhed in a ſingle moment, with equal facility. But his intention was to ſhew us that he was perfectly free, and exempt from conſtraint. At firſt, the earth was ſhapeleſs, and entirely bare; its ſurface covered over with immeaſurable waters. God would not create it ornamented, as it afterwards was, that it might not appear adorned and rich of itſelf.

On the firſt day, God created the light.—Where was it before? Or how could it ſhoot forth from the boſom of profound darkneſs? God ſays, *Let light be made:* a mode of expreſſion as ſublime as ſimple, and truly characteriſtic of the grandeur of the Deity. *And light was made.* O God of power! thou calleſt the light, and it appears: thou draweſt it out of darkneſs, and into the ſame darkneſs thou canſt replunge it.

On the ſecond day, he made the firmament; that is, that boundleſs expanſe of ſky, which we denominate the heavens. *Let the firmament be made*, ſays the Lord, *and let it divide the waters, that are under, from thoſe that are above. And it was ſo.* At that time, the firmament was devoid of all ornament: for the ſun and the ſtars, which give it its preſent ſplendor, were not yet created. It reſembled an immenſe, but unadorned pavilion.

On the third day, God gathered into one place, the waters, which overſpread the land; and gave to the latter the power of producing herbs and trees. At his command, a bare and naked ſurface, became at once a beautiful landſcape, diverſified with rich meadows and extended plains; with lofty hills, crowned with wood, and pleaſant dales, variegated with every kind of fruit and flower. And what is ſtill more admirable; at the ſame time, each plant was enabled by him, from the ſeed, contained in it, to re-produce itſelf.

On the fourth day, he created the ſun, the moon and the ſtars. What wonders does this day witneſs! Lift up your eyes to the heavens; and behold the luſtre of that brilliant orb, which eclipſes all the reſt. See the ſtately dignity, with which he begins his daily courſe; the beauty, that environs him, as he gradually aſcends the horiſon; the vivid colors, he imparts; the gladneſs, he diſpenſes to univerſal nature. Reflect that this grand luminary is the work of the Almighty. How great then muſt

God

God be! Contemplate the moon, whoſe fainter beams are more adapted to the ſtillneſs of night, to temper it's obſcurity by a ſoft and mild effulgence. Count, if poſſible, the ſtars, my child, and tell me if you can be inſenſible to a ſight ſo truly glorious. It is for us God made the firmament ſo reſplendent and ſo majeſtic. He meant to ſhew us his magnificence, and the inexhauſtible fund of brilliancy, that he himſelf contains.

On the fifth day, God created the fiſh and the birds. *Let the waters*, he ſays, *produce living creatures*, that may ſwim beneath their ſurface; *and the fowls, that may fly under the firmament of heaven.* This command at once ſtocked the ſea with inhabitants, and peopled the air with feathered tribes, no leſs melodious than gay.

On the ſixth day, he produced the animals, that inhabit the earth. *Let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their kinds*, he ſays; and immediately there ſprang up of them a numberleſs variety; diverſified in their ſhapes, and different in their natures. Some of them he endued with ſtrength, others with cunning, and all of them with the qualities requiſite to fill the ſtation, he deſigned them for.

In fine, all other creatures being formed, God was pleaſed to make a maſter for them. But before he attempted this, he ſeemed to pauſe and to recollect himſelf. *Let us make*, he ſays, *man to our own image and likeneſs.* His body he faſhioned out

of

of the mould of the earth. He gave him a ſtrait and upright form, to point him out for the Lord of all the other animals, whoſe ſhape bends them downwards. He then animated this body with a breath of his Spirit; viz. by infuſing into it a ſoul, intellectual and immortal. On this reſts the title man has to any thing great. He not only has a body, compoſed of inert matter: but he likewiſe has a ſoul, capable of thinking and loving, and in it's nature incorruptible; and in this point conſiſts his reſemblance to the Deity. Nothing was now wanting to complete this firſt man's happineſs, but a help-mate like himſelf, to ſhare his bliſs with him. Her then God made out of the man himſelf, and enſured their fecundity by a ſpecial benediction. Thus was marriage firſt inſtituted. And as the whole human race deſcends from theſe two progenitors, we may learn to conſider ourſelves as one and the ſame family.

How admirable, O God, is thy power! How wonderful thy works! One ſingle word of thine ſufficed to produce whatever is out of nothing. Thy works could bring no addition to thy Sovereign greatneſs. But they have taught mankind to know thy power and thy wiſdom. Every thing is obedient to, becauſe every thing is dependent on thee. With what eaſe didſt thou extend the wide arch of the firmament! With what a profuſion of lights haſt thou embelliſhed this rich canopy! How great muſt be thy brightneſs, when, without injury to thyſelf, thou imparteſt it ſo freely and ſo abundantly to thy creatures!

creatures! How raviſhing thy beauty, when but a glimpſe of it ſo enchants us! Thou balanceſt the earth, by the ſole diſpoſal of thy will. To make it habitable, thou haſt aſſembled, as in a repoſitory, the waters, and preſcribed them their boundaries, which they dare not tranſgreſs. The land thou haſt rendered fruitful, to accommodate our wants. For it is for us, O Lord! thou haſt fertiliſed it, and enriched it with ſuch treaſures. Thou openeſt thy hand, and loadeſt us with bleſſings, May then all thy works praiſe thee; and eſpecially man, for whom thou haſt made all the reſt. May kings and people, princes and ſubjects, old and young unite in praiſing thy name. May every thing in heaven, on earth, in the waters, and in the air vie in celebrating thy power and extolling thy munificence.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt ever admire the power of the Almighty.

LECTURE IX.

ON THE FALL OF MAN, AND ORIGINAL SIN.

By one man ſin entered into this world, in whom all have ſinned. Rom. v. 12.

IN coming from the hands of his beneficent Creator, man was pure, uncontaminated and holy.

holy. His underſtanding, guided by the light of heaven, ſhewed him whatever it behoved him to know, without the aid of inſtructions. His will was untainted by any diſpoſition to evil. His mind was ſerene, and it's peace undiſturbed. His body, free from ſufferings, was even inacceſſible to death. What a happy ſtate of being! Such, Theophilus, would have been ours, had Adam but perſevered in juſtice and virtue. Our happineſs depended on his fidelity to his Maker. But how unfortunately, alas! did we loſe it! Man, created free, owed obedience to his Creator. To make him ſenſible he had a maſter, and to prove his ſubmiſſion, God laid on him an injunction, no ways difficult to be complied with. Whilſt he permitted him the uſe of whatever elſe the garden produced, one particular fruit only he reſtricted him from taſting: and this prohibition he accompanied with a menace the moſt ſevere; viz. the puniſhment of death, which he aſſured him ſhould follow the violation of his order. In ſpite, however, of God's threats, as well as of his favors, the woman ſuffered herſelf to be ſeduced by a wily, artful tempter; and, having eat of the forbidden fruit herſelf, preſented it to the man; and thus involved him alſo in diſobedience and guilt.

Such was the crime of our firſt parents: a crime of infinite magnitude, and the ſource of all other crimes. At that inſtant a total change took place in whatever concerned them. They were ſtripped of all the advantages, that God had favored them with

with, at their creation. Their underſtanding was darkened; their will perverted, and bent upon evil; while the dominion of paſſion ſuperſeded that of reaſon. Their bodies became ſubject to pain, infirmities and diſſolution; and their ſouls, by the loſs of grace, to death eternal and irretrievable.

Theſe diſmal conſequences of Adam's ſin are entailed on all his poſterity; becauſe his ſin itſelf is likewiſe entailed on all his deſcendants. By his diſobedience to the Deity, he brought ruin on himſelf; and, with himſelf, on all mankind, whoſe common father he is. We are heirs to his fault and to his puniſhment, as we ſhould otherwiſe have been to his innocence and to his felicity. All finned in the firſt man: all diſobeyed in him. Since his crime then has become ours, we all of us are guilty, and that even before our birth. An incomprehenſible aſſertion; but which the authority of faith forbids us to doubt: it being a leading article of the Chriſtian religion, and of the number of thoſe, that are the moſt clearly marked in Scripture. The holy David ſays of himſelf that he *was conceived in iniquity*. And St. Paul informs us that *Sin came into the world by one only man, and by ſin death*; and that *ſo death paſſed unto all*; *becauſe in one all tranſgreſſed*. We are all born ſinners, and the children of wrath; whence the name of *original Sin*, by which this primary evil is uſually denoted. After ſuch explicit declarations, let us ſeek no other proof. For however

ever great the difficulties, the word of truth itſelf no objection can invalidate.

To this I ſhall add but one ſhort reflexion more. The very pagan philoſophers, by the dint of mere reaſon, had acquired ſo much light, as, I do not ſay to be informed of the certainty of this truth, but at leaſt to ſuſpect that man was born under the preſſure of ſome guilt. They had been led to this conjecture by the view of the miſeries, to which he is ſubject from his cradle. And in fact, without the belief of this myſtery, man himſelf is a myſtery ſtill more incomprehenſible. For how, otherwiſe, ſhall we explain the palpable inconſiſtencies, that enter into his character? Such dignity and ſuch meanneſs; ſo much intelligence and ſo much ignorance; a ſtrong deſire of happineſs, and a conſtant bent to what leads to miſery; what is right he approves, but will not practiſe; what is wrong he condemns, and ſtill commits. The doctrine of *original ſin* can alone ſolve theſe difficulties, and reconcile theſe contradictions. Whatever man has of eſtimable is derived from his creation and primeval inſtitution; the melancholy remains of a once noble edifice. Ignorance and vice are the conſequences of ſin, which has ſpoiled the work of God, and ſo far disfigured it as almoſt to prevent it's being known.

Let us not wiſh, my child, to dive into this inſcrutable myſtery. Rather, let us adore the judgments of the Deity, who conſiders the whole race

of

of man as included in that one, of whom he was pleaſed they ſhould all deſcend. A reſemblance we may ſuppoſe of this rigorous juſtice in any inſtance, where the infamy of the crime attaches to the family of the perſon guilty, as well as to himſelf. But compariſons drawn from human affairs muſt always be imperfect. The juſtice of man is but a ſhadow of that of God. Neither this, nor his mercy can be meaſured by our rules of acting, which fall infinitely ſhort of his, both as to efficacy and extent.

From what an elevation, O God! are we allen; and into how deep an abyſs are we precipitated! Thou didſt originally make man that both himſelf and his poſterity might enjoy eternal bliſs. It depended only on himſelf to preſerve, and to tranſmit to his deſcendants, the great advantages, thou wert pleaſed to give him at his creation. All thou didſt require of him was fidelity and obedience. With theſe, he would have communicated the ſame happineſs to his offspring; and we ſhould have been born innocent and heirs to thy favor. But, alas! by violating thy command, he forfeited at once whatever he had to expect, both for himſelf and for us. For we, unhappily, ſinned in him, and muſt partake of his puniſhment. Through him, we come into the world under the ſentence of thy diſpleaſure. We ſtand condemned to all kind of miſery, both temporal and eternal; to the attacks of infirmity, and to the tyrranny of concupiſcence,

piſcence, to the diſſolution of the body, and to the death of the ſoul. And we muſt have been for ever excluded from thy amiable preſence, had not thy infinite mercy prepared a remedy, and furniſhed us the means of reconciliation and ſafety. I adore, O my God! and bow to the ſeverity of thy juſtice. Make me ſenſible, by this dreadful puniſhment, of the enormity of ſin, and the diſmal conſequences attending it. Teach me to fear it more than death, of which it is the parent; and grant that, by the aſſiſtance of thy grace, I may never abuſe that liberty, which is ſtill left me unimpaired.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt regard Sin as the greateſt of all Evils.

LECTURE X.

ON THE PROMISES OF A SAVIOUR.

God hath fulfilled the promiſe, which he made to our fathers.
Acts xiii. 32.

BY his ſin, man was utterly loſt, had not God, in his tenderneſs, taken pity on his wretched ſtate. He had offended an infinite majeſty; and, of courſe, was incapable to make atonement for his crime, for which it was not in his power to offer an adequate ſatisfaction. But the Almighty, Theophilus,

ophilus, by a mercy as incomprehenſible as his juſtice, came in to his relief. The conſolatory promiſe of a Saviour followed cloſe upon man's offence: and God, even before he pronounced the ſentence of condemnation on him, ſhewed to Adam, under the figure of the malediction of the ſerpent, the ſalvation, he intended, both for him and his poſterity. For, in curſing the ſerpent, that is to ſay, the devil, who had diſguiſed himſelf under that appearance for the ſeduction of the woman, he declared that of her ſhould be born one, who ſhould cruſh the ſerpent's head; viz. by effectually ſubverting the power of that infernal ſpirit. And thus it was underſtood both by our firſt parents and their deſcendants.

But this promiſe was not fulfilled till four thouſand years after. God thought proper, during this long interval, to unfold it by degrees, and to repeat it more diſtinctly. In fact, the promiſe, God made to Adam, was afterwards confirmed by another given to Abraham, whom he deſtined to be the head of a people, peculiarly devoted to him. *Go forth*, ſays the Lord, *out of thy country, Abraham; and come into the land, which I will ſhew thee. I will make of thee a great nation, and in thy ſeed ſhall all the people of the earth be bleſſed.* Theſe laſt words import that of the progeny of Abraham ſhould be born the Saviour of the world: they ſhew in what ſenſe the firſt promiſe was to be taken; and how the offſpring of the woman ſhould bruiſe the ſer-

pent's head. Idolatry and vice had overrun the whole world, when God promiſed to Abraham that, through him and his deſcendants, all nations ſhould be delivered from the tyranny of the devil, and brought back to the knowledge of God, the ſource of every bleſſing. We ſhall ſee, as we advance in the order of the prophecies, that ſuch is the purport and meaning of theſe words. This promiſe was renewed to Iſaac and to Jacob, in the very ſame terms; the latter of whom, inſpired from above, clearly predicted the coming of that Redeemer, who had been promiſed from the beginning, and pointed out the time. For being on his death-bed; and foretelling, by the divine direction, to his children aſſembled around him, what would happen to their poſterity in after ages, he addreſſed himſelf to Juda in theſe remarkable words: *Juda! thee ſhall thy brethren praiſe; the ſons of thy fathers ſhall bow down to thee: the ſceptre ſhall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his family, till he come, that is to be ſent, who ſhall be the expectation of nations.*

Remark, Theophilus, how light is gradually thrown on the promiſe, firſt made to Adam, and afterwards reiterated to Abraham. The object of this promiſe is here ſtyled the *Meſſiah*, or the perſon ſent by God, by way of diſtinction. He is expected by the Gentiles, who, through him, are to be bleſſed. His particular family begins to be known; and the time of his coming is clearly marked; viz. when the ſceptre, or the preeminence

of

of dominion, ſhall be removed from the houſe of Juda. In a future lecture, I will ſhew you the literal accompliſhment of this prediction. At preſent, we will purſue the explication of theſe promiſes. Three hundred years after the diſſolution of Jacob, the Almighty, deſirous to liberate his people from the ſervitude of the Egyptians, under which they long had groaned, raiſed up an extraordinary perſonage, to whom he communicated a ſhare of his ſpirit and power. Moſes, having given a law to this people, ſuggeſted by the Deity, and conducted them through numberleſs difficulties to the entrance of the promiſed land; Moſes, I ſay, perceiving his end draw near, aſſembled the Iſraelites, and confirmed to them, on the part of God, the future coming of the Meſſiah, who ſhould ſpring from the race of Juda. *The Lord*, he ſays, *ſhall raiſe you up a prophet, out of the midſt of your brethren, like to me; fear ye him.* Thus did God keep his people in the conſtant expectancy of the Saviour, whom he had promiſed to their forefathers. This prophet, like to Moſes; like him, the deliverer of his brethren; like him, the promulgator of a new law; like him, the mediator of a covenant hitherto unknown; in whoſe preſence Moſes himſelf is ſilent, and who alone is to be attended to, when once he begins to ſpeak, is the Saviour of mankind, whoſe doctrine, enlightens the world, and of whom God himſelf is pleaſed to ſay, *This is my beloved ſon, hear ye him.* Till his arrival, there was not to be ſeen in Iſrael,

a prophet like to Moſes, with whom the Deity would condeſcend to converſe face to face, and who ſhould be the mediator of his people and the law-giver to his inheritance.

Deep, indeed, O God! was the wound, which ſin had inflicted on our race. But however grievous our evils, thou art able to heal them: for no diſorder is incurable to an omnipotent phyſician. If the effects of thy juſtice are inconceivable, thoſe of thy mercy are not leſs ſo. Thou requireſt a compenſation adequate to the offence; but thou art pleaſed thyſelf to ſupply us with the victim. Thou demandeſt the payment of an infinite debt; but thou putteſt into our hands the means to diſcharge it. Thou didſt conſole loſt man with the hopes of a Saviour, who ſhould deliver him from his miſery, and effect his reconciliation. This conqueror of the devil, whom thou didſt promiſe to Adam, thou didſt announce to Abraham as the perſon, who ſhould pour out his bleſſings on all the tribes of the earth. This ſame thou didſt ſhew to Jacob, as thy choſen Meſſiah, the object of the wiſhes and of the expectation of mankind. Thou didſt cheriſh this fond hope, by repreſenting him to Moſes, as the mediator of a new alliance, whom thou commandeſt us to liſten to. Yes, O Lord! we are docile to his voice. We make profeſſion of believing in him, and of adhering to his doctrine. We are, therefore, entitled to conſider ourſelves as truly the children of the promiſe. Thou didſt aſſure

Abraham

Abraham that thou wouldeſt be his God, and the God of his people; and thou counteſt of his family all, who imitate his faith. We then are thy people, and heirs to the benediction, that was to make the happineſs of the Gentiles. We will ever celebrate thy mercy, which has deigned to prepare ſo efficacious a remedy for the cure of all the evils, that ſin had brought upon us.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt firmly believe in the promiſes of God.

LECTURE XI.

ON THE EXPLICATION OF THE PROMISES, AND THE FUTURE CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES.

This is what the Prophets ſaid ſhould come to paſs that Chriſt ſhould be the firſt to ſhew light to the Gentiles. Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

GOD himſelf, my Theophilus, has diſcloſed the meaning of the promiſes, which he made to the Patriarchs, and he has clearly informed us in what conſiſted that benediction, which the Meſſiah was to communicate to all the nations of the globe. The Iſraelites alone excepted, the whole world was ſunk in darkneſs and in the horrors of idoltary. God was totally forgotten; and the devil

was every where honored under different forms.—An impiety ſo general, confirmed by a long ſucceſſion of ages, and ſupported by the voice of paſſion, which it univerſally favored, might ſeem almoſt incurable. But the Deity was determined to put an end to the rule of Satan, and to recall deluded man to the knowledge of the truth.

This revolution was deſtined to be the work of the Meſſiah; of whoſe illuſtrious character one of the moſt diſtinguiſhed features was that he ſhould enlighten the people, whom he was commiſſioned to bleſs. God deputed men, animated with his ſpirit, to announce, in his name, the future converſion of the Gentiles. This prophecy is expreſſed in the moſt clear and explicit terms, and frequently repeated in the pages of the bible. Not a prophet, but foreſaw, and predicted this great event, ages before it happened; and at a time, when it appeared incredible. By the direction of heaven, they declared that the Meſſiah ſhould diſpel the miſt, which, till his arrival, ſhould cover the earth; that he ſhould bring light to the Gentiles, whoſe deliverer he ſhould be, as well as of the Jews; and that of both of them united he ſhould form one only people, to be the worſhippers and ſervants of the true and living God.

If you look into the ſacred writings, you will be aſtoniſhed to ſee in how many paſſages, and with what perſpicuity and clearneſs this prediction is marked; a few of which only I can here ſingle out

out. David, ſpeaking of the conſequences of the coming of the Meſſiah, ſays: *All the ends of the earth ſhall remember, and ſhall be converted to the Lord. All the kindreds of the Gentiles ſhall adore in his ſight. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he ſhall rule the nations.*— Hear the prophet Iſaias. *The holy one of Iſrael*, that is, the Meſſiah, *ſhall be given as a witneſs to the people, and as a leader to the Gentiles. A people unknown ſhall follow him, and all nations ſhall run unto him. In that day, the Lord ſhall be exalted, and the idols ſhall be dethroned. Behold, darkneſs ſhall cover the earth, and a miſt the people: but the Lord ſhall ariſe, and ſhall be ſeen in his glory: and the Gentiles ſhall walk in his light, and kings in his brightneſs.* Then, addreſſing himſelf to the Meſſiah; *I have taken thee by the hand*, he ſays, *and given thee for a covenant to the people, for a light to the Gentiles, to open the eyes of the blind, and of them, that ſit in darkneſs. It is a ſmall thing that thou ſhouldeſt help me to raiſe up the tribes of Jacob, and to convert the dregs of Iſrael. I have given thee to be the light of the Gentiles, to be my ſalvation even to the extremities of the earth. Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts*, ſays another of the prophets, *the time ſhall come when the nations ſhall repair to Jeruſalem, to ſeek the Lord, and to offer him their vows. People from all climates ſhall thus addreſs the Iſraelite; we will accompany thee, for we know that God dwells with thee. In that day, I will deſtroy the idols; and the remembrance of them ſhall not remain; the Lord ſhall be the king of all the earth, and*

his name alone ſhall be honored among men. In ſimilar terms do they all uniformly expreſs themſelves.

According to their aſſertions then, the coming of the Meſſiah is to be productive of an event of the moſt weighty importance; a ſignal revolution, which the whole univerſe ſhall witneſs. And what this is to be it is not poſſible to miſtake. The Gentiles enlightened, and the world converted: idolatry deſtroyed, and the true God made known; ſuch are the happy conſequences of the arrival of the Meſſiah. Whence, all the nations of the earth ſhall be truly bleſſed in him: becauſe the light which he diffuſes, ſhall be to them a ſource of benediction and grace. I will ſhew you by and by, no leſs evidently, that this great change took place at the coming of Jeſus Chriſt; and that it was brought about by thoſe, whom he employed for this purpoſe, under the guidance of his Holy Spirit. This ſole fact is a clear and ſatisfactory proof of the divine origin of that religion, which he came to propagate on earth.

I plainly ſee, O my God, how the nations were to be bleſſed in the ſeed of Abraham. I perceive that thy Chriſt was to be the object of their wiſhes. For it was by him they were to emerge from that lamentable darkneſs, which had ſo long blinded their ſteps. He was to be their light and their ſalvation: to reſcue them from the tyranny and oppreſſion of Satan, and to mediate their peace and reconcilement with thee. And we ourſelves,

O Lord

O Lord! particularly, were concerned in thy promiſes; who, though our forefathers ſat in darkneſs, have been gratuitouſly brought to thy admirable light. Permit us not, we beſeech thee, to render ourſelves unworthy of ſo ſignal a mercy. Make that ſacred religion, which has been tranſmitted to us from thy Meſſiah, become daily more eſtimable. It bears ſuch ſtrong marks of the ſtamp of thy Divinity, that we muſt be blind not to be ſatisfied of its being thy work. An infinite wiſdom only could have foreſeen, at ſo great a diſtance, the wondrous change that was to happen at the coming of thy anointed; as an infinite power ſolely could have produced ſuch an alteration. I return thee my thanks, O God! for having made our holy religion ſo conſpicuous and plain, that, unleſs we wilfully ſhut our eyes, we cannot but be ſtruck with thoſe rays of conviction, that beam from it on every ſide.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould bleſs the Almighty for having called us to the true faith.

LECTURE

LECTURE XII.

ON THE MARKS OF THE MESSIAH, AS DESCRIBED BY THE PROPHETS.

To him all the Prophets give teſtimony. Acts x. 43.

IN proportion as the time approached for the coming of the Meſſiah, the predictions relating to him became more clear and circumſtantial.—The Deity ſeemed wholly occupied with the proſecution of this grand object. He deputed prophets, from time to time, to announce his arrival; each of whom he directed to point him out by ſome particular feature, and ſuch as might be proper to note and to make him known, at his appearance.—They were as ſo many meſſengers, ſent beforehand to keep alive the cheriſhed hope. And God himſelf traced out the qualities, that were to be united in his Chriſt. By the organ of his miniſters, he foretold the various circumſtances attending his birth, his life, his death and his reſurrection. The hiſtory of the Meſſiah was already written and divulged, before he ſhewed himſelf in perſon. And as the portrait, my dear Theophilus, cannot fail to be highly intereſting to you, I will proceed to explain it, by a ſhort detail of the leading prophecies, that regard this auguſt ſubject.

David is one of thoſe, who, by the inſpiration of the Almighty, ſpeaks moſt openly of the Meſſiah. He calls him his *Lord*, and owns him for the

the *Son of God.* He ſays that *His empire ſhall extend over all the regions of the globe, and ſhall know no other limits, than thoſe of the univerſe itſelf.* He foretells his cruel death, and the very torments, he ſhould be made to ſuffer. He ſees his bored hands and feet; his mangled fleſh and disjointed bones; his divided garments, and conteſted robe; his parched palate, moiſtened with gall and vinegar, and the univerſal miſery of his agoniſing moments. And, at the ſame time, he aſſures us that he ſhall not experience corruption; but ſhall riſe triumphant and victorious from the trammels of the grave.—A prophecy ſo much the more wonderful, as it was made above a thouſand years prior to its ultimate completion.

Iſaias, who lived three hundred years later, deſcribes the Meſſiah with equal perſpicuity. He ſees him ſpring from the *root of Jeſſe*, and have a *virgin* for his mother. He ſtyles him *the admirable child, the father of future ages, the prince of peace*, and finally *God.* His reign is to be eternal, and all nations ſhall adore him. At his command, the lame ſhall walk, the deaf ſhall hear, the dumb ſhall ſpeak and the blind ſhall ſee. But the ſame Iſaias, after relating the glory of the Meſſiah, relates alſo his humiliations. He repreſents him as diſregarded, contemned and deemed unworthy of notice: as the outcaſt of mankind, a man of ſorrows, and loaded with infirmities, in conſequence of his having charged himſelf with the expiation of our

crimes

crimes. He ſhall be ſpit upon, treated as a criminal, and with ſuch led to death; and all this he ſhall ſubmit to as peaceably and as meekly, as a lamb to the butcher's knife. The Prophet adds that, by his death, he ſhall become the head of a numerous poſterity, viz. his Church, to which the Gentiles ſhall be called; while the Jews, with the exception of only a few of them, ſhall be rejected and ſet aſide, for their obſtinate incredulity. Can any thing be more explicit, but the Goſpel itſelf, and the hiſtory of Chriſt? And yet this prediction was previous full ſeven hundred years to the coming of our Saviour.

The other prophets ſaw no leſs diſtinctly the myſtery of the Meſſiah. One foretells that Bethlehem, the ſmalleſt of the towns of Juda, ſhall be ennobled by his birth. Another ſees him ſold by a faithleſs diſciple for thirty pieces of ſilver: he ſees even the potter's field, on which the money ſhall be laid out, when returned by the traitor. The ſame prophet deſcribes him as a king, though humble and poor, and riding on an aſs; the higheſt pitch of grandeur he ever affected, and which he only aſſumed on his entrance into Jeruſalem: whilſt another proclaims the glory of the ſecond temple, which the Meſſiah, the deſired of nations, is to honor with his preſence.

The prophet Daniel determines the period and the preciſe epoch of his coming. For, while intent upon conſidering the captivity of his people, and the

the ſeventy years of its duration; on a ſudden, the Spirit of God raiſes him to things more elevated and important. He foretells, after ſeventy weeks of years, that is, after a ſpace of four hundred and ninety annual revolutions, the end of another captivity, far more oppreſſive, from which mankind ſhall be delivered by the death of the Meſſiah: a deliverance, that conſiſts in *the abolition of ſin, and the everlaſting reign of juſtice.* He informs us that, in the laſt of theſe weeks, Chriſt ſhall be put to death, a new covenant eſtabliſhed, and the ancient ſacrifices aboliſhed After the death of God's anointed, ſhall come the extremity of miſery, he ſays: the holy city ſhall be laid waſte, the people, who rejected him, caſt off, and the abomination of deſolation ſhall fix it's reſidence in the very temple. In fine, Malachy, the laſt of the prophets, tells us that, in lieu of the ancient ſacrifices, ſhall be ſubſtituted a pure oblation, which ſhall be preſented to the Lord, not only in Jeruſalem, which had hitherto enjoyed that privilege excluſively; but in every place, from the riſing to the ſetting of the ſun; and this no longer by the Jews, who had once been the choſen inheritance; but by the uncircumciſed Gentiles, among whom the name of the Lord ſhall, in future, be great.

And obſerve, my dear child, that the authenticity of theſe prophecies admits of no doubt: They are acknowledged by a people, whoſe teſtimony is unqueſtionable; the Jews I mean, the declared enemies

emies of the Chriſtian name; who, although theſe predictions are replete with their condemnation, cannot ſtill but reſpect them. The books, from which they are taken, are in the hands of our adverſaries, from whom we have received them, and who cannot be ſuſpected of being partial to our pretenſions.

Such, O God! are the wonders, thou didſt diſcloſe by the prophets, many centuries beforehand, by which thou didſt gradually unfold this myſtery, by the moſt diſtinct predictions. To confirm my faith, I will here bring into one point theſe different prophecies. The Meſſiah, ſhewn at a diſtance as the deſcendant of Abraham, is again, on a nearer view, acknowledged for the ſon of David. The time of his coming is marked out with the utmoſt preciſion. He ſhall be born of a virgin, and that in Bethlehem. He ſhall be a king, though poor and very unlike to an earthly one. He ſhall enter Jeruſalem, in a kind of triumph, mounted on an aſs. He is God, and the ſecond temple ſhall receive him. He ſhall work many miracles, and all of them in favor of the wretched and diſtreſſed. He ſhall publiſh a new law, and eſtabliſh another covenant; but his people ſhall not own him. He ſhall be ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver; and the money ſhall be employed in purchaſing a potter's field. He ſhall be treated with the greateſt indignity; and ſhall have his hands and feet bored. His garments ſhall be divided; and his robe drawn for

by

by lot. By his death, ſin ſhall ſhall be effaced, and iniquity aboliſhed; whilſt he himſelf, it's conqueror, ſhall riſe triumphant from the grave. In puniſhment of this crime, Jeruſalem ſhall be deſtroyed, it's inhabitants diſperſed, and it's ſacrifices annulled; the Gentiles ſhall be converted, and all nations ſhall worſhip him. By him, thy name, O Lord! ſhall be rendered great throughout the univerſe; and a pure, and unſullied victim ſhall every where be offered to thee.

How admirable this detail, when we conſider it's preciſion and the diſtance of time, at which it was diſtinctly foretold. Who, but thyſelf, could thus pierce into futurity, and diſcover events ſo remote, with ſuch minuteneſs and accuracy? O my God! I adore thy all-wiſe counſels, in which every thing is connected; and which have thus dictated beforehand the hiſtory of the Meſſiah, the Saviour of mankind, to ſerve as a proof, that we might at all times have recourſe to, of the truth of that religion, which, by thy mercy, we profeſs.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt adhere cordially to our religion, which is as ancient as the world.

LECTURE

LECTURE XIII.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE MESSIAH, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.

These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John xx. 31.

YOU are now acquainted, Theophilus, with all the principal features, by which the prophets, from the beginning, marked out the Messiah. If these features resemble and accord with Jesus Christ; and cannot, upon the whole, be applied with propriety to any one but him, is it not clear that he is the Messiah; that is, the Saviour promised to Adam; the descendant of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed; the Son of David, whose reign, as foretold, should be eternal? You shall witness, as evidently, that Jesus Christ, our Lord, united in his person all the marks, above mentioned. You shall see that the description of the Messiah, delineated by the Prophets, is the picture of Jesus Christ; and a picture so exact and so perfectly resembling, that he cannot but be known by it. To be convinced of which, we need only compare the predictions with the events; holding in one hand the ancient and in the other the new Testament, as we will now do together.

In the first place, then, it is certain that at the time of the birth of Christ, there was an expectation of the Messiah spread generally not only in

in Judea, but through all the countries of the Eaſt.—And this fact is atteſted by the heathens themſelves. "It was an opinion," ſays Suetorius, "which had "long prevailed in the Eaſt, that, at that period, "there ſhould come thoſe from Judea, who ſhould "obtain univerſal empire." Tacitus tells us the ſame thing. "Many" he ſays "were perſuaded "that, at that time, Judea ſhould give birth to "them, that ſhould be maſters of the world." This general expectancy was founded on the noted prophecy of Jacob, which foretold that the Meſſiah ſhould come, when the Jews ſhould ceaſe to be governed by the family of Juda: and again upon that of Daniel, which fixed the arrival of the Meſſiah at the epoch of four hundred and ninety years. And accordingly, Chriſt was born at the time, when Judea was ſubject to the dominion of Herod, a foreigner; and at the cloſe of the ſeventy weeks of years, as computed by Daniel.

The prophecies announce that the Meſſiah ſhould be a deſcendant of the progeny of David; that he ſhould have a virgin for his mother, and be born of her at Bethlehem. Open now the Goſpel. You will there ſee that Jeſus was born of a virgin, of the family of David, and in the little town of Bethlehem; though it was not her uſual reſidence; but, by a particular diſpoſition of the divine providence, ſhe and Joſeph were obliged to repair thither, to enregiſter their names and the place of their nativity. According to Moſes, the Meſſiah

was to be the author of a ſecond law, of greater perfection than the firſt, and to eſtabliſh a new covenant This law, my child, you know: of this covenant you are a member. Iſaias ſays the Meſſiah ſhould confirm his doctrine by reſtoring ſight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the uſe of their limbs to the cripple and life to the dead. Compare this deſcription with the words, addreſſed by our Saviour to the diſciples of St. John, to ſhew that he was truly the Chriſt: *Go, and relate to John, that the blind ſee, the deaf hear, the lame walk and the dead ariſe.*

Recollect what the prophets foretold of the triumphant entrance of the Meſſiah into Jeruſalem and its temple; of the treachery of one of his diſciples; of the reward of that treachery; of the uſe to be made of the money; of the vile treatment, he ſhould experience; of the torments, he ſhould endure; of his ignominious and cruel death; and laſtly, of the reſult and fatal iſſue of it. Then peruſe the recital, which the Evangeliſts give, of the paſſion of Jeſus Chriſt; and tell me if it be poſſible to conceive a more exact conformity between the predictions and their events. Chriſt made his entrance into Jeruſalem amidſt the acclamations of the people: and his triumph was accompanied with the peculiar circumſtance, foreſhewn by Zachary, of his being mounted, not on a ſplendid car, like the monarchs of the earth, but on a contemptible aſs, attended by it's foal. He went often into the

the temple, taught there publicly, and foretold it's deſtruction; to ſhew that the prophecy was fulfilled, and that no other Meſſiah was, in future, to be looked for. He was ſold for thirty pieces of coin, and the money was expended in the purchaſe of a potter's field. He was loaded with inſults, aſſociated with malefactors, faſtened to a croſs with nails, that pierced his hands and feet; while the ſoldiers, that crucified him, divided his cloaths among them, and caſt lots for his unſeamed robe.—He continued an inhabitant of the grave for only three days, and then raiſed himſelf from it with unparallelled glory.

Who, with marks ſo diſtinct, can miſtake the Meſſiah, deſcribed by the prophets? But let us finiſh the likeneſs, and compare the conſequences of his death with the predictions concerning it. It was foretold that, on the murder of the Meſſiah, and in puniſhment of it, the holy city ſhould be ſubverted, with it's temple and altars, and that utter deſolation ſhould quickly ſucceed. Of the completion of this prophecy you may ſoon be convinced, my child. Look into the hiſtory of the Jews, written by Joſephus, one of their principal men — You will there find that, in a very ſhort ſpace from the death of Jeſus Chriſt, Jeruſalem was taken and raſed by the Romans, the temple laid in aſhes and Judea laid waſte. Eleven hundred thouſand Iſraelites periſhed miſerably in this war: the remains of that unhappy people were diſperſed over the globe:

and this deſolation ſtill continues, at the diſtance of eighteen centuries. We ſee the Jewiſh race univerſally proſcribed, as objects of horror, without a temple, without a government, without a country, and every where bearing about them the viſible tokens of divine vengeance.

Finally, it is foretold that, by the coming of the Meſſiah, thoſe, who till then had been ſeated in the darkneſs of idolatry, ſhould be enlightened from above, and converted to the Lord; that the name of God ſhould become great among them; that there ſhould be no longer but one people and one Church, of which Chriſt ſhould be the head; and that in all places an unſpotted victim ſhould be offered to the Deity. As to this point, we have but to open our eyes, and to contemplate, without prejudice, the preſent ſtate of the univerſe, to be convinced that Jeſus Chriſt is the promiſed Meſſiah.—Behold the Chriſtian church, compoſed of various nations, which were formerly idolatrous. See the homage now paid to the one only God, where incenſe was burnt to a plurality of fancied Deities. And who, but Jeſus Chriſt, has removed the veil from their eyes? Was it not he, who ſent diſciples to illuminate the earth, to make known the true God, and to trample on the idols?

Wherefore, from all here ſaid it is manifeſt that Jeſus Chriſt is the Meſſiah; ſince there is not a ſingle prediction concerning the latter, but what is evidently verified in the perſon of the former.—

Chriſt

Chriſt was born at the time, in the place, and in the manner it was foretold the Meſſiah ſhould be. He lived, and he died as the Meſſiah was to live and die. Jeruſalem deſtroyed, the temple conſumed, the ancient mode of worſhip abrogated, the Jews expelled from their country, and ſtill wandering for eighteen hundred years, all theſe things concur, together with the converſion of the world, to evince beyond a doubt that our Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, is the Meſſiah, promiſed to the Patriarchs, and announced by the Prophets.

This ineffable myſtery is then, O God! accompliſhed, which the ancient Saints ſo long ſighed after. The Saviour, promiſed to our firſt parents, who was to overturn the dominion of Satan: the deſired of nations, who was to bring benediction and light to all mankind: the legiſlator, who was to be the author of a holy covenant between thee and man: the Prince of peace, who was to conciliate a guilty world with offended heaven, is come, at length, and ſtands revealed to our eyes. What a conſolation for us, O Lord! to find in thy prophets ſo clear a prediction of what thy Evangeliſts tell us; and to ſee in their writings, ſo diſtinctly marked out *The lamb, who taketh away the ſins of the world*, and waſhes our polluted ſouls in the laver of his blood. No; it is not poſſible to be deceived in the perſon of him, whom thou haſt delineated with an accuracy ſo faithful and ſo ſtriking. At his ador-

able name let then every knee bend, and may the univerſe unite in his worſhip and ſervice.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt teſtify our reſpect, whenever we hear pronounced the ſacred name of Jeſus.

LECTURE XIV.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

A Virgin ſhall conceive and bear a Son; and his name ſhall be called Emmanuel. Iſaias vii. 14.

THE Meſſiah, Theophilus, whom at preſent you know to be our Lord, Jeſus Chriſt, had titles and qualities aſſigned him by the prophets, that could ſuit with none but God. Iſaias had even ſtyled him ſo, and had named him *Emmanuel*, which ſignifies *God with us*; inaſmuch as he was to be born, and to live in the midſt of us. It is the Son of God, therefore, the ſecond perſon of the bleſſed Trinity, who became man for our redemption.—This truth, which the Goſpel expreſſes much more clearly, is called the myſtery of the incarnation. I will now lay before you what faith teaches of it.

The only Son of the Deity, the Word, exulting from all eternity in the glory of the Father, deigned to humble himſelf ſo low, as to aſſume a body and a ſoul,

a ſoul, like to thoſe of us poor mortals It was not the Father, who became man, nor the Holy Ghoſt. It was the Son, the ſecond perſon of the ſacred Trinity. His body was formed, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, out of the ſubſtance of the pious Mary; who conceived and brought him into the world, remaining at the ſame time a pure and ſpotleſs virgin. Every thing regarding the conception and birth of Chriſt is divine, and ſuperior to nature. The Spirit of God, who effected this miracle, renders Mary fruitful, without impairing her integrity. The manner, by which ſo great a myſtery was brought to paſs, is as incomprehenſible to the underſtanding, as unutterable by language. But the following is the relation, which the Goſpel gives us of it.

When the time, pre-ordained by Heaven, was arrived, an Angel was deputed to communicate to Mary that ſhe was about to be a mother, without ceaſing to be a virgin; and that the child, to be born of her, ſhould be the Son of the moſt High, and the production of the Holy Ghoſt. The bleſſed virgin believed, and aſſented to the word of the heavenly meſſenger. Immediately, the myſtery of the incarnation was accompliſhed. The ſacred Spirit formed within her the body of Jeſus Chriſt. To this body he ſuperadded a ſoul: and at that moment was eſtabliſhed an indiſſoluble union between the divine and human nature, in the perſon of the Son of God. Thus, the only begotten of the Father

became man, without ceaſing to be God. Jeſus Chriſt was at once both perfect God and man: and the bleſſed Mary was mother of God, in the plain and obvious ſenſe. For ſhe conceived a God incarnate; whom, after the uſual length of time, ſhe uſhered into the world; ſtill remaining as before, an immaculate virgin.

You ſee by this account, Theophilus, that Jeſus Chriſt, as man, acknowledges no father: though, to conceal this myſtery, under the cover of becoming decency, the Almighty was pleaſed that Mary ſhould be previouſly married to Joſeph. But as God, he has a Father, who begot him from all eternity; and to whom he is equal in every perfection. In Chriſt there are two natures, diſtinct and unmixed; that of the Divinity, by which he is God, the ſame as his Father; and that of our humanity, by which he is man, ſimilar to ourſelves.—Nevertheleſs, there is but one ſole perſon in him, viz. the perſon of the Son of God. However inconceivable this myſtery, we do not heſitate to believe it, becauſe revealed by him, who is the fountain of truth.

In yourſelf you find an image of it, which, although but imperfect, may contribute to aſſiſt your faith. Your ſoul, which is of a nature wholly ſpiritual and immortal, is joined to a body, which, being compoſed of matter, is liable to decay. The union of theſe two ſubſtances, ſo eſſentially different, conſtitute one only man; who is at once body

and

and ſoul, corruptible and incorruptible, brute matter and intellectual ſpirit. In like manner, the divinity of the Word and the nature of man united, without being confounded, form one ſole Jeſus Chriſt, true God and true man; begotten from eternity by the Father, and born in time of the virgin; as God, omnipotent; and as man, clothed with weakneſs. For, ſin alone excepted and it's inſeparable conſequences, ſuch as ignorance and concupiſcence, Chriſt was ſubject to all our miſeries; with this only difference that, whereas we are bound to experience them in defiance of ourſelves, in him they were the effect of his own free choice. But we are not to ſuppoſe the divine nature was altered by the myſtery of the incarnation. God, without ceaſing to be what he eſſentially is, vouchſafed to unite our nature to his own.—Nor did he demean himſelf by ſo doing. The humiliations and infirmities, to which he became thereby expoſed, regard only his humanity. In Jeſus Chriſt, the merits are thoſe of a God, while the ſufferings are thoſe of man.

O Word incarnate! I adore thee. I believe thee to be truly both God and man in one; begotten by thy Father, before the exiſtence of ages; and born, in time, of the ſubſtance of a virgin.—As God, thou art equal to thy Father, and as man, like to us. Though both God and man, thou art ſtill but one Chriſt. Though poſſeſſed of two natures, there is but one ſole perſon in thee, the perſon

ſon of the Son of God. Such is the faith, in which I was baptiſed; and in which, by thy grace, I mean to live and die. I give my fulleſt aſſent to this ineffable myſtery, however ſuperior to the weakneſs of my reaſon. I believe it, my God! though I do not comprehend it; and conſider it, for this very reaſon, as ſtill more worthy of thee. Never ſuffer me to be ſo ungrateful as to queſtion thy kindneſs, merely becauſe it exceeds the reach of my comprehenſion. And after all, I ſee nothing in this myſtery but the adorable effect of an infinite mercy: and ſo far is my faith from wavering, at the view of an immenſe and inconceivable love to man, that I more humbly acknowledge my God under the veil of infirmity.

The Practical Inference.

That it is our duty to nouriſh a moſt grateful remembrance of the myſtery of the incarnation.

LECTURE XV.

A CONTINUATION OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

Mercy and truth have met, juſtice and peace have kiſſed.
Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

ABOVE all things, my dear child, remember that, for our ſake only, the Son of God became

became incarnate: to free us from the ſervitude of ſin, and from the puniſhments of hell; and to merit for us a life eternal, to which our claim was juſtly forfeited. We had offended God; and this offence was infinite; becauſe it attacked an infinite Majeſty. The juſtice of the Deity required an atonement, and an atonement adequate to the grievouſneſs of the inſult. But as an infinite ſatisfaction ſurpaſſed the narrow powers of a mere limited mortal, a God incarnate was ſolely competent to make reparation to the divine juſtice. It was requiſite he ſhould be man, to be capable of ſuffering; and beſides, as it was man, that had ſinned, it became incumbent on man, to atone for the crime. It was alſo requiſite he ſhould be God, to confer a merit of infinite value on the ſufferings of man.

By the myſtery of the incarnation, the ſame perſon is both God and man in one. *The Word became fleſh*, to redeem us from ſin: he clothed himſelf with our miſeries, to liberate us from them.—By this admirable plan, the crime is puniſhed, while the criminal is ſaved. Thus juſtice and mercy are conciliated in him. The injury done to God is abundantly repaired, and the Deity is honored in the manner, he is entitled to. Chriſt is become our mediator: and a moſt perfect one he is; allied to God, by his divine, and to us, by his human nature; who can ſuffer, as we do, becauſe he has a nature like to ours; and by his ſufferings, can reconcile

reconcile us to his Father, becauſe he is, in all reſpects, eqnal to him; a mediator, in fine, who, through his infinite ſanctity, is wholly acceptable to him, with whom he has undertaken to conciliate the offender.

Perhaps a compariſon may be of ſervice to illuſtrate this matter to you. Had a king been inſulted by one of the inferior claſs of people, neither the party offending, nor any other ſubject could make an adequate reparation for the affront, offered to him. Whatever the guilty perſon could do, would fall very far ſhort of the atrociouſneſs of the injury. But, if the ſon of this ſame king, the heir to his crown and the actual partner of his royalty, touched with compaſſion for the wretch, ſhould deſcend from his throne, throw off his regal robes, and attired in rags, ſhould proſtrate himſelf before his father, implore his forgiveneſs, and ſubmit to any puniſhment, that might be deemed adequate to the offence; ſuch a ſatisfaction you may conceive would be proportionate to the dignity of inſulted majeſty; the injury would be repaired, and the monarch, in his clemency, without diſparaging his juſtice, might ſhew mercy to the criminal. A reſemblance this, though a faint one, of the favor obtained for man, by the incarnation of the Son of God.

How wonderful is the Almighty in all his operations, and more eſpecially in this incomprehenſible exertion of his infinite love! What a

mercy,

mercy, to have given us his only Son for a Redeemer! How deeply indebted are we to this generous Saviour, who has humbled himſelf ſo far as to lay aſide his glory, to veſt himſelf with our nature, to take up our infirmities, and to become like to ourſelves, in every thing but ſin. Learn to reverence the humiliations of this God incarnate. He is no leſs worthy of your homage in the ſtable of Bethlehem, under the ſwaddling clothes, with which he is there bound, than in heaven, on the throne, on which he is now ſeated in glory.—Deſpiſe not the lowly ſtate, to which he has ſtooped in your behalf, and which conſtitutes your honor and the firmneſs of your ſtrength. Had he not become what you are, you never would have been the child of God, the heir of heaven. He ſaved that nature only, which he aſſumed: and he aſſumed it entirely, that he might ſave you completely, both as to body and ſoul.

For us then, O God! thou waſt made man.—At a time, when, as ſinners, we were moſt undeſerving of thy love, thou didſt annihilate thyſelf for us. The ſatisfaction, which thou didſt offer, is proportioned to the offence, and the crime is fully expiated. Thou haſt reconciled the claims of thy juſtice with the calls of thy mercy. We were unable to ſoar up to the elevated heights of the Divinity above; but, by condeſcending to dwell among us, thou haſt deigned to ſtoop to us, that thou mighteſt raiſe us up to thee. Our life was forfeited

forfeited by ſin; but, by aſſuming our nature, thou haſtmercifully reſtored it to us. We are become the children of God, by thy becoming the Son of man. I know, my adored Saviour! that thou loveſt in a god-like manner, that is, without reſtriction or bounds. May this exceſs of love operate it's due effect upon my heart. May I love thee, as thou haſt loved me; and may I devote myſelf to thee without diviſion or reſerve.

The Practical Inference.

That Jeſus Chriſt muſt be the object of our warmeſt affections.

LECTURE XVI.

ON THE PUBLIC LIFE OF CHRIST: HIS MIRACLES.

They brought to him all the ſick, that were taken with divers diſeaſes; and he healed them. Matt. iv. 24.

YOU acknowledge the voice of God, Theophilus, when it ſpeaks to you by the prophecies, which are ſo clear, ſo circumſtantial and ſo minutely fulfilled, And in fact, God alone could have foreſeen ſuch diſtant events, and have marked their accompliſhment with ſo much preciſion and certainty. But there is alſo another way, that God makes uſe of, to diſcover his will to men, viz. that of miracles.

Were

Were you to ſee a man giving laws to nature, walking on the waters, reſtoring ſight to the blind, raiſing the dead to life, you would doubtleſs believe that he was the meſſenger of the Deity: for you are ſenſible ſuch works, as theſe, exceed the power of man, and that God alone can interrupt the ordinary courſe of nature. The divinity of his miſſion our Redeemer has proved by the evidence, we now ſpeak of, as well as by that of the prophecies. For, to evince that he was the Meſſiah, he worked many miracles, as the Goſpel informs us. He changed water into wine; gave ſight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the uſe of their limbs to the paralytic. The moſt inveterate diſorders he cured in an inſtant; often by a ſingle word, and ſometimes without approaching, or even ſeeing thoſe, he relieved. He commanded the winds and ſea, and ſtilled their violence, by a word. Twice, in the deſert, he multiplied a few loaves ſo as to feed an immenſe crowd with them. Even death was obedient to him, and returned, at his command, thoſe whom it already had ſeized. He became inviſible at pleaſure. He knew the moſt hidden thoughts of ſuch as he converſed with. He laid open the ſecrets of futurity He was transfigured on mount Thabor, and there gave to his attendants a glimpſe of his heavenly ſplendor.

And obſerve, Theophilus, that all the miracles of our Saviour were uſeful to men and conducive to their welfare; the proofs of his benevolence no

leſs

leſs than of his power. Nor had oſtentation the ſmalleſt ſhare in them. In vain did the Phariſees requeſt of him a ſign from heaven. In vain did Herod long to ſee ſome exertion of his power.—But, though he would never work a prodigy to gratify their curioſity, he relieved, without heſitation, all the infirm, that applied to him.

Obſerve likewiſe that the reality of his miracles is undoubted and inconteſtable. He performed them not in ſecret, or in places hidden and concealed; but in the open ſtreets, before all the people, and in places of public reſort, ſuch as the temple, &c. The reſurrection of Lazarus was effected at Bethania, in the vicinity of Jeruſalem, and in the preſence of many witneſſes. The cure of the perſon, who, for thirty-eight years, had been ſtruck with a palſy, and that of the man, who had been blind from his birth, were operated in the heart of the populous metropolis. The laſt mentioned of theſe miracles made a great noiſe in that city. The heads of the Synagogue, being much alarmed by it, interrogated very ſtrictly both the man and his parents. But all their enquiries only confirmed the truth of the miracle and added to it's celebrity. If our Saviour performs any wonders in the deſert, it is ſtill in the preſence of a vaſt concourſe of people. But the greater part of his miracles he did before the eyes of the Phariſees and of the Doctors of the law; who, being his profeſſed enemies, were perfectly diſpoſed to call whatever he did in queſtion

tion. The evidence of theſe miracles was, however, ſo forcible, as to confound their malice; and even to extort from them a formal acknowledgment — *What are we doing*, ſaid they? *this man performs many wonderful things: if we ſuffer him to go on, he will be followed by the whole nation:* and it was this that decided them to put him to death.

Moreover, theſe miracles were afterwards atteſted by ocular witneſſes, who ſigned their evidence and ſealed it with their blood. In their narration of theſe facts, candor and ſincerity are throughout conſpicuous. Read but the account, they give of them, and you will ſee an air of truth, that impoſture cannot mimic. They called on the Jews themſelves, to witneſs what they related; and no one dared to contradict them. Numbers even of the Jews were converted by theſe miracles, being compelled to acknowledge that God only could operate them. *We know*, they ſaid, *that thou couldſt not do ſuch works, unleſs God himſelf was with thee.*

To conclude then, my dear child, the miracles of Chriſt were ſufficiently numerous, and clear enough to evince that he was truly the Meſſiah. And, indeed, the people, ſtruck with admiration at ſuch wonderful works, as none of the preceding prophets had, at any time, equalled, confeſſed him ſo to be. *This*, they exclaimed, *is the prophet, who was to come into the world: a great prophet is riſen up among us, and God hath viſited his people.* Nor did our divine Saviour reſt ſatisfied with performing

miracles himſelf: but he alſo conferred on his diſciples the power of working them. *Go heal the ſick*, he ſaid to them, *make clean the lepers, caſt out devils and raiſe the dead to life.* And in fact, in the courſe of their miſſion, the Apoſtles performed theſe ſignal prodigies. By their means, they effected the converſion of the world; which will ever continue a permanent proof of the miracles, wrought by them. For without thoſe viſible marks of the divine interpoſition, the univerſe would ſtill be ſunk in the darkneſs of idolatry.

Thou haſt eſtabliſhed the Chriſtian faith, O God, on immoveable foundations. Thou haſt afforded her, for her ſecurity, two different proofs; each of them ſo ſimple, as to come within the reach of the meaneſt capacity; and, at the ſame time, ſo evident, as to be convictive to the moſt enlightened: proofs manifeſtly ſtampt with the marks of thy power; and which neither the efforts of man, nor the deluſions of the devil can imitate or falſify.—Theſe proofs are the prophecies, delivered by thy truth; and miracles, the effects of thy infinite power. Thou haſt raiſed up inſpired perſons, who, many ages beforehand, might predict with an entire certitude what the human mind could never foreſee. And of theſe predictions ſuch is the evidence and minuteneſs, as to ſurpaſs all admiration. To this proof thou haſt added that of miracles: of miracles the moſt public, and multiplied in an affinity of ſhapes. Theſe are ſtriking facts, that the moſt ignorant

ignorant cannot miſtake; and of which thouſands are not only the witneſſes, but the objects; bearing in their own perſons the viſible effects of their favorable influence. What more can be wanting to the moſt full conviction, to the firmeſt belief? For who, O Lord! but thyſelf, can, with a ſingle word, appeaſe the winds, make the blind to ſee, the deaf to hear, the dumb to ſpeak and the dead to riſe? With what a dignified and divine authority didſt thou command obſequious nature! *Be ſtill*, thou ſaideſt to the ſea, and inſtantly it was calmed: *Huſh ye winds*, and the winds were ſilent: *Ariſe, Girl: Young man, get up: Lazarus come forth.* It was thus thou didſt ſpeak to death; and trembling death obeyed thee. When I hear this tone of authority, can I miſtake the voice of the Almighty, the abſolute Maſter of the creation.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould endeavour to call to mind ſome of the miracles of our Redeemer, whenever any ſuggeſtion againſt faith would obtrude itſelf upon us.

LECTURE XVII.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

And they were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine—and wondered at the words of grace, that proceeded from his mouth. Luke iv. 22, 23.

THE doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt is that, my dear Theophilus, which is delivered to you in the catechiſms and at public inſtructions. And how admirable is it! How worthy of the Deity! How proportioned to our neceſſities! In compariſon with it, all human ſciences are nothing.

By this ſacred doctrine, we obtain a knowledge of God, and of our duties towards him. It teaches us what we are, and acquaints us with the obligations, that we owe to our fellow creatures. How ſublime the myſteries, which are the object of our faith! Never could human reaſon have imagined any thing ſimilar. No. None but our Lord himſelf could have revealed ſuch auguſt truths. It is from him we have learned that there are three perſons in the Deity, and that theſe three perſons are ſtill but one God. It is by him we are informed that he is himſelf, at once, the Son of God and the Son of man; and, of conſequence, both God and man together. Whence, appears alſo the love God bears us; ſince he has even given his only Son, to effect our ſalvation.

How

How conſpicuous the ſanctity, that pervades the rules of conduct, which he preſcribes in his moral documents! Let us here view them in ſhort. God alone is to be feared, he ſays, *Fear not them, who having killed the body, can do no more: but fear him, who after killing the body, can alſo deſtroy the ſoul itſelf.* God is to be loved above all things. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole ſoul, with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength.* We muſt repoſe our whole confidence in God.—*Be not ſolicitous for your life, what you ſhall eat; nor for your body, what you ſhall put on. For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all theſe things.—Behold the birds of the air, who neither reap nor ſow. Conſider the lillies of the field: not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like to them. Now, if God hath ſuch care of theſe, how much more will he have of you?* It is our duty to ſerve God alone, and to devote all our actions to him. *No one can ſerve two maſters. Perform not your good works before men, with a view to be ſeen by them.* For if you do, you will receive no reward from your Father, who is in heaven. Chriſt commands us to love our neighbour as ourſelves; and, under this name of neighbour, he comprehends all mankind, not excepting even our enemies. *Do good to thoſe, that hate you; pray for them, that perſecute and calumniate you; that you may be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his ſun to riſe upon the wicked, as well as upon the virtuous.* He orders us to forgive our neighbour whatever offence he may

have committed againſt us. *Forgive and you ſhall be forgiven.* He forbids us to be angry at our neighbour; and threatens with hell-fire all injurious and reproachful ſpeeches. He prohibits all raſh and unfounded judgments. *Judge not, and you ſhall not be judged; condemn not, and you ſhall not be condemned: for in the ſame meaſure, as you ſhall mete to others, it ſhall be meaſured to you.* He enjoins us to reſiſt our paſſions, and condemns not only thoſe exterior actions, which the indulgence of them might lead us to, but the harbouring any deſires or even thoughts of what is evil. A legiſlator, who brings with him ſuch a reſpectable code of laws, can come only from heaven.

You ſee then, my child, that the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt prohibits all vice, and inculcates every virtue. It is wholly calculated to make us happy, were we but faithful in the practice of it. To this doctrine, in itſelf ſo amiable, our Saviour adds the moſt forcible motives, and ſuch as are the beſt ſuited to make a deep impreſſion on us. He tells us that this ſhort and tranſitory life, which we drag on here on earth, ſhall be followed by a life eternal, in which the Deity will ſuperabundantly reward them, that ſhall have been obedient to his commands; and will puniſh with the greateſt ſeverity all ſuch, as ſhall have violated them. For this reaſon, he declares thoſe to be happy, who renounce the enjoyments of this life, to ſecure themſelves a place in the bliſhful regions of the next. And upon the

ſame

ſame grounds, he proclaims them to be wretched, who ſeek their happineſs here below: *For what*, he ſays, *will it profit a man to gain the whole world, if he loſes his ſoul*, for an unbounded eternity?

How admirable, O God! is thy holy law! How ſublime it's dictates! How pure it's morality and how much elevated above our corruption. Such a doctrine can come from thee only, O Lord! The more it is examined, the more clearly do the equity and wiſdom of it appear. It remedies all our evils; it heals all our diſorders; it ſhews us in what our happineſs conſiſts, and marks the road to it. How happy, O God! are they, who conform their conduct to it's maxims! All their paſſions kept in ſubjection, each virtue ſtrikes deep it's root, and produces in their hearts the fruits of a delicious peace. The hope of eternal felicity fills them with a ſweet and ſerene joy. The pleaſures, they partake of, leave no remorſe behind them: the evils, they experience, loſe their acrimony and ſting, when tempered by the unction of thy ſolacing grace. Not ſuch, O Lord! are the effects of the doctrine of the impious. Emiſſaries of Satan, they ſpeak the deceitful language of vice only and the paſſions; and their maxims, accordingly, produce nothing but diſtreſs of mind. But thy word is truth itſelf; which, while it enlightens the underſtanding, brings conſolation to the heart. The principles of the wicked ſhall periſh with them: but thy law ſhall continue for ever. Give me the grace, O my Sove-

reign good! to meditate on it inceſſantly, to love it, and above all to practice it with diligence and fidelity.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould prefer the knowledge of religion to every other ſcience.

LECTURE XVIII.

ON THE VIRTUES OF CHRIST.

Which of you will convince me of Sin? John viii. 46.

THE doctrine, which Chriſt delivered, he himſelf was pleaſed to practice in the moſt ſovereign degree of perfection; and his whole life was one continued and exact obſervance of it. The more, my dear child, you conſider the actions of your Redeemer, the more will you admire the ſanctity, which ſhines ſo eminently throughout his conduct. He was pleaſed to paſs through the ſtage of infancy, to ſet you an example of thoſe virtues, that are ſuitable to your age. You ought, therefore, to take him for your model, and ſtrive to imitate him in that ſtate.

He encreaſed in grace and wiſdom, in proportion as he advanced in years: that is, he unfolded gradually to the eyes of men that wiſdom, the fulneſs

neſs of which he poſſeſſed, from the firſt moment of his conception; as the ſun appears more brilliant, the nearer he approaches to his mid-career. The Goſpel informs us that Chriſt was ſubject to the orders of his parents. This docility includes all the virtues required in a child. For the child, that is ſubmiſſive, is obedient to the commands, and attentive to the inſtructions of all, that have power over him: and by this kind of behaviour, what progreſs does he not make, both in ſcience and in virtue! Jeſus Chriſt moſt aſſuredly did not want this aſſiſtance. He was not a common child, who needs a prop to ſupport his weakneſs, or a maſter to inform his ignorance. He, who ſuffered himſelf to be thus conducted, was the eternal wiſdom itſelf. He, who ſubmitted voluntarily to his creatures, was the ſovereign Lord of the univerſe. And all this to give you an example; to teach you to obey your parents, and to be ſubmiſſive to them, that have the care of your education.

Jeſus Chriſt perſevered thus humbly in the exerciſe of all the milder virtues, till the age of thirty, when he began his public miniſtry. Then, at once, broke out the luſtre of the moſt ſublime and brilliant character. His meekneſs was beyond expreſſion. No one did he forbid to approach him; not even the moſt notorious and public ſinners. On the contrary, he received them with kindneſs; he made no difficulty of eating with them; and, when reproached for his condeſcenſion,

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he replied: *I am come not to ſeek the juſt; only the ſick need a phyſician, and not thoſe, that are in health.*— He gives a deſcription of himſelf, under the figure of a good Father, who runs to meet his ungrateful ſon, and caſts himſelf on his neck; bathing him with his tears and yielding to the tranſports, with which his happy return inſpires him. This parable I could wiſh to you peruſe; which, however, you will not, without feeling yourſelf moved. He expreſſed much pleaſure on having little children preſented to him; he bleſſed them, and ſaid to his diſciples, *Let them come to me; for it is to them*, and to ſuch as reſemble them, *that appertains the kingdom of heaven.*

Meekneſs is, throughout, the leading feature of his character; and a meekneſs, which charms, and inſpires confidence, at the ſame time. But this did not prevent him from ſeverely reprimanding hardened ſinners; and particularly the Phariſees, whom he pointedly reproached with their hypocriſy and pride. He ſhewed an invincible patience under all kinds of afflictions. Follow him, my Theophilus, from his cradle to his croſs; and you will every where find him mourning, labouring, ſuffering. He endured hunger, thirſt, fatigue and all the inconveniencies of poverty.— He would have nothing, as his own. He had not even a place to repoſe his head in. He lived on what was given him by them, that attended on his ſermons. He bore without complaint the preſſure of the crowds, that often incommoded him; the importunities

portunities of the ſick, that on every ſide aſſailed him. Amidſt the many inſults, that were offered him, never did he attempt to defend or revenge himſelf.

But it was chiefly under the various circumſtances of his paſſion, that he manifeſted a patience, altogether divine. You know what he endured, and what a ſeries of unheard of torment, he was pleaſed to undergo Yet he ſuffered neither complaint, reproach, nor menace to eſcape him; and, when nailed to the croſs, he even prayed for his executioners. And take notice, that it depended upon himſelf to avoid all theſe ſufferings. With a ſingle word he overturned them, that came to ſeize upon his perſon: ſo that, if he ſubmitted to ſuch a cruel death, it was not for want of power to avert, but becauſe he voluntarily choſe it.

The whole life of Jeſus Chriſt was one continued exerciſe of the moſt aſtoniſhing humility.—He was born of indigent parents; he paſſed thirty years in obſcurity; and when pleaſed to manifeſt himſelf to the public, he did it in a manner ſo repugnant to the ideas of wordly ſtate and grandeur, as to give the fulleſt conviction of their emptineſs and inſignificance. He never ſought his own glory. He forbade his miracles to be mentioned: and when the people, whom he had fed by an exertion of his power, were for making him their king, he retired privately to a mountain, to avoid their well-meant, but miſtaken importunity. Such was his diſengage

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ment from riches, that he loved poverty; ſuch his diſengagement from honors, that he ſought humiliations; ſuch his diſengagement from pleaſures, that he longed for ſufferings. With reaſon then did he reproach the Jews with their reſiſtance to his ſacred miſſion; for a ſanctity ſo extraordinary, evinced, beyond a doubt, that it was derived from God, the teacher of their fore-fathers. And ſuch, in an inferior degree, is the character of thoſe, whom the Almighty ſtill chooſes for his miniſters to men. Their pure and untainted morals, their virtues, inacceſſible to human paſſions, form a proof in their favor, that juſtly claims attention. Thoſe, that are ſincere and well-diſpoſed, receive them without heſitation: for they cannot but acknowledge the word of the Almighty, when they hear it from the lips of innocence and virtue.

O my Saviour! thou art the model of holineſs. Thou haſt ſet us an example of every virtue; and, to be perfect, we need but ſtudy and imitate thy pattern. Thy whole life was one inſtruction for the regulation of ours; nor do we ſin, but when we deviate from thy conduct and example.— Although rich, thou wouldeſt be born poor, to teach us to contemn worldly opulence and wealth. From the glory of thy Father thou didſt deſcend to humiliations, to cure our pride. Being ſovereignly happy, thou ſubmittedſt to ſufferings, to detach our affections from the pleaſures of the earth. Thou haſt told us, O God! that we muſt imitate thee:

I have

I have given you an example, that you do, as I have done. And to them only haſt thou promiſed a place in the manſions of thy glory, who, on earth, ſhall endeavour to become ſimilar to thee. By thy example, therefore, we muſt learn to deſpiſe the honors, the riches, and the pleaſures of this tranſitory life.—Grant us, O Lord! the grace of entering into thy diſpoſitions, and of adopting the like ſentiments. Teach us to judge of things as thou didſt; that we may neither love, eſteem, or deſire any thing in this world, but what thou haſt firſt loved, eſteemed and deſired; that, while we make profeſſion of following thee, we may do it in effect, by the imitation of thy virtues.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt unite all our actions to thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt.

LECTURE XIX.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION.

Pilate delivered up Jeſus, when he had ſcourged him, to be crucified. Mark xv. 15.

THE ſuper-eminent ſanctity of Jeſus Chriſt, the purity of his doctrine and the luſtre of his miracles, inſtead of gaining the Phariſees and the rulers

rulers of the Jewiſh people, only inflamed their envy, and inſpired them with the deſign of putting him to death. For this purpoſe, they bribed Judas, one of his diſciples, with thirty pieces of ſilver.—The hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion you may, perhaps, have read. But, to excite your piety, it will not be improper to recall to your memory the principal circumſtances of that tragical event.

Our Redeemer, then, was loaded with inſults, with calumnies and with curſes. He was ſpit upon, and buffetted. He was rated beneath a notorious criminal. He was abandoned to a cruel flagellation; and, when covered with wounds and blood, was delivered up to a barbarous ſoldiery, who put a crown of thorns upon his head, and treated him with every indignity, that ſcorn could ſuggeſt.—The people, who had never experienced but the moſt benevolent kindneſs from him, clamorouſly demanded his death; notwithſtanding that his judge, a mere heathen as he was, declared him innocent and guiltleſs. In fine, he was nailed to a croſs, erected for this purpoſe between thoſe of two public thieves, that were crucified with him: the moſt ignominious of puniſhments then in uſe, and reſerved only for ſlaves and malefactors of the blackeſt dye.

But think not, Theophilus, that Chriſt ſubjected himſelf to theſe unparalleled torments through neceſſity or compulſion. I have told you already that his death was free and voluntary; of which

which he had often foretold the time, the place and the manner. He advanced to meet his enemies; and, of his own accord, ſurrendered himſelf into their mercileſs hands. In the apparent weakneſs of his death, he gave evident proofs of his Divinity. He ſhewed himſelf plainly to be the maſter of his own life, and the abſolute Lord of the creation. At his death, the ſun was darkened; the earth ſhook; a mournful obſcurity overſpread the univerſe; the veil of the temple was rent in two; the tombs were opened, and the dead aroſe out of them. They, who had attended his execution, returned into Jeruſalem, ſtruck with awful horror, and crying aloud, as they beat their breaſts; *Surely this perſon was the Son of the living God.*

From all this it is apparent that Chriſt ſubmitted to his death willingly, and from the ſole motive of his love to man. And this is what ought principally to ſtrike us, when we reflect upon his ſufferings. He died, only becauſe he loved us. He was pleaſed to take up the burthen of our ſins, and to bear the puniſhment due to them. The innocent ſubſtituted himſelfin the place of the guilty; to receive the ſevere inflictions, which their crimes had merited; but which he, in his mercy, was deſirous to avert from them. We had ſinned; and God laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Chriſt, therefore, died for all: nor is there any one, who may not ſay with St. Paul; *Jeſus Chriſt has loved me, and has given himſelf for me.*

Yes,

Yes, my dear child, you ought to ſay to yourſelf; my ſins occaſioned the Son of God to be put to death. He thought of me. He foreſaw the crimes I ſhould one day commit, and, to expiate them, he deigned to ſuffer. The more I ſin, the more I contribute to his torments. And are you ſenſible of the horror, with which this reflection ought to ſtrike you? Do you perceive how much you owe to your loving Redeemer, and the extent of that gratitude, which he deſervedly claims of you? Had you been reſcued from a fire, and drawn out of the flames by the affection of a friend, who, to preſerve you from the danger, ſhould have expoſed himſelf to it, with what heartfelt tranſports would you not expreſs your acknowledgments! And could you ever forget the claim of gratitude, ſuch an exertion would demand of you? But, Theophilus, you owe infinitely more to Chriſt. The misfortune, from which the conduct of ſuch a friend would have ſaved you, is nothing in compariſon with the torments of hell. Such a friend would be a man only; but, Jeſus Chriſt is your God; and a God, whom you have injured; this man would have done no more than offer his life, whereas your Redeemer has in reality ſacrificed his for you. What return of love can be ſufficient, then, for the charity of your God; for a charity ſo exceſſive and ſo ſenſibly affecting!

At what a price haſt thou redeemed me! How dearly has my ſalvation coſt thee, O merciful Jeſus!

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I behold thee ſated with affronts, covered with wounds, crowned with thorns and giving up the ghoſt, in the moſt cruel agony of torture. Was it not ſufficient to become incarnate for us? Was it neceſſary to paſs through ſuch a courſe of bitter ſufferings? Thou waſt deſirous to ſhew us what ſin is; and to make us judge of the magnitude of the evil, by the violence of it's remedy. And how, after this, can I commit it with ſuch eaſe! How blind muſt I be! Sin has coſt thee thy life; and yet I dare to yield to it. No, my God! never will I loſe ſight of this ſalutary reflection. Under every temptation, I will look at thy croſs. I will trace upon my heart the figure of this inſtrument, ſacred to thy memory and to the expiation of ſin. This ſhall be my ſupport amidſt the tumult of my paſſions. By the exceſs of thy ſufferings thou deſiredſt alſo to ſhew me, O God! the exceſs of thy love. Can I be callous to an affection ſo diſintereſted and tender? Alas! whatever I may do, my love for thee will fall infinitely ſhort of that, which thou haſt teſtified for me. Was I to immolate my life to thee, I ſhould not ſtill do enough But thou demandeſt not this ſacrifice. All thou requireſt is that I ſhould live for thee, as thou haſt died for me. And can I be ſo ungrateful as to refuſe this ſmall teſtimony of acknowledgment and affection? No, dear Lord, my life belongs to thee, and from this moment I devote it to thy ſervice and love.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould remember that, whenever we ſin, we crucify anew our Redeemer, Jeſus Chriſt.

LECTURE XX.

ON THE BURIAL OF CHRIST, AND HIS DESCENDING INTO HELL.

Jeſus Chriſt died for our ſins, and was buried. 1. Cor. xv. 3. *And he deſcended into the lower parts of the earth.* Epheſ. iv. 9.

OUR Saviour, after ſuffering the moſt extreme tortures on the croſs, for the ſpace of three hours, at length expired; and that at the very moment, in which was immolated the paſchal lamb, of which his ſacrifice was a figure. To be aſſured of his death, a ſoldier pierced his ſide with a lance, from whence iſſued a ſtream of mixed blood and water.

The ſenſe of theſe words, *Jeſus Chriſt died*, is obvious and clear. They mean that his ſoul was divided from his body. But, at the ſame time, you muſt remark, Theophilus, that his Divinity was not ſeparated from either his body or his ſoul. It continued uninterruptedly united both to the one and to the other; inſomuch that, even in the tomb, the body

body of Chriſt was ſtill the body of the Son of God, and his ſoul, in this ſtate of disjunction, the ſoul alſo of the ſame begotten of the Deity. By dying, Jeſus ceaſed to be the Son of man; but never, for the ſmalleſt inſtant, did he deſiſt from being the Son of God. It was the Son of God, that was buried, in his body: it was the Son of God, that, by his ſoul, deſcended into hell.

You underſtand likewiſe as eaſily the ſignification of theſe words, *Jeſus Chriſt was buried.* The Evangeliſts tell us that Joſeph of Arimathea went to Pilate, and requeſted of him the body of Chriſt, that he might inter it in a proper manner. This being obtained, he unnailed it from the croſs, embalmed it, and laid it in a new ſepulcre, that had been cut in a rock. But the body of our Saviour, although depoſited in a tomb, was ſtill incorruptible. For ſo David had prophecied: *Thou wilt not permit thy holy one,* he ſays, *to experience corruption.*

The words, which form the ſecond part of the text of this lecture, require an explication. *He deſcended into hell, or the lower parts of the earth.*— What are we to underſtand by *hell?* This term is uſed in Scripture to denote a variety of places. Firſt, the reſidence of the devils and damned ſouls: this cannot be the place, to which the ſoul of Chriſt deſcended. Neither is it purgatory, where thoſe, that die in a ſtate of grace, but ſtill with ſome guilt to expiate, complete their atonement. But there is a third place, where, in expectation of a Re-

deemer, the ſouls of the Patriarchs and other Saints, who had preceeded his time, awaited his arrival. However deſerving theſe pious ſouls and acceptable to the Deity, they were not admitted into heaven; becauſe the ſin of Adam had cloſed it's gates; which could not be reopened, but by the death and aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt. Hither then our Saviour deſcended, to liberate theſe holy people, and to take them up in triumph into the regions of bliſs.

Let us now make ſome reflections on the burial of Chriſt, and draw ſuch leſſons from it, as may tend to animate our piety. A huge ſtone had been rolled to the aperture of the ſepulcre by thoſe, who had interred him. On the other ſide, the Jews had put a ſeal upon this ſtone, and had there placed a guard of ſoldiers; for fear, they ſaid, leſt his diſciples ſhould ſteal away the body, and then publiſh to the world that their Maſter was riſen, according to his promiſe. Thus did divine providence diſpoſe of things; in order to render more authentic the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, by the very meaſures, his enemies took to prevent all impoſture. The Almighty uſes, for the execution of his plans, the obſtacles themſelves, that men oppoſe to his deſigns. Interment was neceſſary to prove the reality of his death. Had our Saviour ariſen immediately, or in a ſhort ſpace of time, his enemies would not have failed to aſſert that he had not been really dead. Unleſs the Jews had guarded

guarded ſo watchfully the monument, where his body was laid, they might have affirmed, with ſome plauſibility, that his diſciples had carried it off.—But his remaining three days in a tomb cloſed up, ſealed and well guarded, evinces, beyond diſpute, that he aſſuredly was dead; and eſtabliſhes the faith of his glorious reſurrection. For the certainty of his death made out, the ſucceeding teſtimony of the Apoſtles in favor of his reſurrection, a teſtimony confirmed by their miraculous works, leaves no room to doubt that he truly roſe again.

Thus was completed the redemption of man. Jeſus Chriſt ſubmitted to the ſtroke of death; and, by his own death, ſanctified ours. He merited for us the grace of making an acceptable ſacrifice of this penalty of ſin. Jeſus Chriſt ſubmitted to the humiliation of the tomb; to take from the grave what nature finds repugnant in it, and to give us the conſolation of hoping for the future reſurrection of our own bodies. The ſight of our leader, ſhut up in the ſepulcre, whence he quickly ariſes to reintegrated life, enſures us the accompliſhment of what the Apoſtle thus promiſes: *The body is ſown in corruption, it ſhall riſe in incorruption: it is ſown in diſhonor, it ſhall riſe in glory: it is ſown a natural body, it ſhall riſe a ſpiritual body.*

Thou haſt ſubjected thyſelf, O God! to all the puniſhments due to ſin; and, by this thy ſubmiſſion, haſt ſweetened their bitterneſs and turned them into bleſſings. By thy death, thou haſt procured

us a right to immortality. Thy death has altered the nature of ours. It was but a puniſhment due to our diſobedience: whereas, united to thine, it is become the greateſt and the moſt agreeable ſacrifice, we can offer to the Deity. Death is now nothing more than a paſſage from a life of miſery to a life of happineſs; from a tranſitory and fleeting ſtate, to a ſtate immortal and permanent. If death has it's pangs, thy example ſtrengthens us; and teaches us to reſign ourſelves with ſubmiſſion, and to expire with confidence. Or, if the grave inſpires a dread, the reflection that thou didſt deſcend into it, and ariſe from it triumphant, revives our drooping ſpirits. If apprehenſion ſuggeſts that we are about to enter an unknown land, we know thou haſt thyſelf firſt explored it; and that thou wilt there be our guide, our ſupport and our recompenſe. Grant, O my God! that when I come to die, my love may exceed my fear; and that, entertaining in thy regard the ſentiments of a child, I may be enabled to ſay with joy, *Father! into thy hands I commend my ſpirit.*

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould unite our death to that of our Redeemer.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXI.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

God raiſed him from the dead, the third day: and he was ſeen, for many days, by thoſe, who are to this preſent time his witneſſes to the people. Acts xiii. 30, 31.

JESUS Chriſt remained in the ſepulcre but three days. On the third, he raiſed himſelf from the dead; that is, he reunited his ſoul to his body, and came forth from his monument in triumph, as he had often foretold he ſhould. *The ſon of man,* he had ſaid, *ſhall be delivered up to the Gentiles, ſhall be crucified, and ſhall riſe again, on the third day. As the prophet Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of a whale, ſo ſhall the ſon of man be three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth; and on the third, he ſhall raiſe himſelf to life.* The Apoſtles had ſeen verified the firſt part of this prediction, in his ſufferings and death: but the completion of the ſecond they were to wait for with confidence. Nevertheleſs, dejected by the ignominy of his paſſion, they were not diſpoſed to give faith to his reſurrection. For ſome time, they continued to reject the repeated aſſurances, they received of it: nor did they yield at length, till compelled to own the truth, by the evidence of the fact: their ſeeing and feeling him could alone extort their aſſent. God permitted they ſhould doubt and be ſlow in believing, to the end that, being convinced themſelves by the cleareſt

proofs, they might afterwards convince the world; and that their incredulity might confirm our faith.

As the reſurrection of Chriſt is the foundation of his religion, ſo the Deity has been pleaſed that this foundation ſhould be immoveable. For this reaſon, he has omitted nothing, that could tend to remove our doubts, and to ſet this matter in ſo clear a light, as not to be conteſtable, but by a voluntary blindneſs. *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſays St. Luke, *ſhewed himſelf frequently to his diſciples, after his paſſion; evincing to them by many proofs that he was alive; appearing to them for the ſpace of forty days, and ſpeaking to them of the kingdom of God.* He diſcovered himſelf, firſt, to the pious women, who had come to the ſepulcre, to embalm his body. He, next, ſhewed himſelf to St. Peter; and then, to the two diſciples, that were going to Emmaus, to whom he explained the Scriptures. He, afterwards, appeared to the whole aſſembly of the Apoſtles, whom he eat with, and ſhewed his wounds to. St. Thomas being abſent, on that occaſion, and continuing obſtinate in his diſbelief of Chriſt's reſurrection, from not having ſeen him, he appeared a ſecond time, when they were all met together, with St. Thomas in their company: and, to convince his incredulity, made him touch the wounds of his hands and feet, and put his finger into his ſide. Thomas, no longer able to reſiſt the truth, exclaimed with rapture, *My Lord and my God.*

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Our Saviour alſo manifeſted himſelf to ſeven of his diſciples, as they were fiſhing on the lake of Tiberiad. He enabled them, by his power, to make a wonderful capture of fiſh, and then eat with them. The meal finiſhed, he exacted of St. Peter a teſtimony of his love; and this he made him repeat three times, as it were to ſatisfy for his having three times denied him. He then conferred on him the government of his Church, and forewarned him of the kind of martyrdom, by which he ſhould afterwards ſuffer death. He ordered his diſciples to haſten to Galilee; and pointed out the ſpot to them, where they ſhould ſee him in all his ſplendor. Thither they repaired, to the number of five hundred, and he there manifeſted himſelf to them. In fine, having ſpent forty days in conſoling, and inſtructing his Apoſtles; in confirming their faith, and laying the foundations of his Church, the time being arrived for his quitting the earth, he conducted his diſciples to the mountain of Olives. He once more inculcated the ſublimeſt truths; to theſe he added the moſt conſolatory promiſes. He then raiſed up his hands; gave them his bleſſing; and in the act of ſo doing, was lifted from the earth, and borne up to heaven, in the preſence of them all.

If we unite in one point of view what the Evangeliſts relate concerning the different apparitions of Jeſus Chriſt, we muſt ſuppoſe they could not fail to operate the moſt complete conviction upon the minds of the Apoſtles. Theſe apparitions were

were neither few, nor tranſient. During forty days, they ſeveral times ſaw him: they eat, and converſed with him: they received his inſtructions relative *to the kingdom of God*, that is to ſay, his Church; propoſing their difficulties, and hearing his anſwers. They had both the time and the means to diſcover the truth; inſomuch that their perſuaſion was totally removed from all ſuſpicion of a raſh and haſty credulity. They began by not believing, by doubting; and they only ſurrendered to the irreſiſtible force of proofs, and to the evidence of facts. Theſe facts ſo viſible and palpable, precluded miſtruſt; and left no room for the ideas of illuſion or ſurpriſe; and that eſpecially as ſo many witneſſes were concerned therein. If, at firſt, they were apprehenſive that what they ſaw was a ſpirit; *Touch me*, Chriſt ſaid, *ſee* and be certain; *a ſpirit has neither fleſh nor bone; and you perceive that I have both.* They ſee, they feel, they are aſſured; and convinced of his reſurrection, they bear teſtimony of it throughout the univerſe. They every where preach up Jeſus reſuſcitated; they every where meet with numberleſs contradictions; and in ſpite of theſe contradictions, the myſtery, they announce, is every where received.

The proofs of thy reſurrection, O Chriſt! which thou gaveſt to thy Apoſtles, were ſo manifeſt and clear, as to do away all doubt. Thou didſt appear to them at different times, for the ſpace of forty days, converſing with them, ſatisfying their

queſtions

queſtions and unfolding to them the meaning of various paſſages of the Scripture. Thou didſt ſhew them the ſcars of thy wounds, and they touched them with their hands Thou didſt eat with them. Thou didſt inform them of the change to be effected, by their means, on the face of the univerſe Thou art then truly riſen, and this thy reſurrection is the immoveable baſis of the religion, thou haſt founded. The truth of what thou taughtedſt is invincibly proved by the fact of thy reſurrection. Since thou art riſen again, thou art ſurely the Son of God, as well as the Son of man. Since thou art riſen again, thy doctrine is true, and thy religion divine. In believing thy reſurrection, of courſe, I believe all the myſteries of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, without exception or reſerve.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould thank Almighty God for having eſtabliſhed our faith on ſuch unqueſtionable evidence.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXII.

REFLEXIONS ON THE RESURRECTION.

Jeſus ſhewed himſelf alive after his paſſion, by many proofs; for forty days appearing to them. Acts i. 3.

I HAVE already laid before you, Theophilus, the proofs of the reſurrection: but it will be proper to make ſome further obſervations on the ſtrength of theſe ſame proofs, as they ſerve to render more evident the neceſſity of yielding to the teſtimony of the Apoſtles.

We cannot ſuppoſe they were deceived or deluded. To aſſert this, we muſt ſay that the whole aſſembly of the diſciples imagined they ſaw Chriſt, heard him, touched him, eat and talked with him; and this for a continuance of forty days; that they fancied they heard from his mouth many new and important things, concerning the publication of the Goſpel, the ſettlement of the Church, and the adminiſtration of the Sacraments; while all this time they neither ſaw nor heard any thing. The abſurdity of ſuch a ſuppoſition is too groſs, to be admitted. We may be deceived, it is true, in a judgment formed upon opinion only. But to be miſled upon a fact notorious and palpable; to imagine we ſee, for the ſpace of forty days, what we do not ſee; that we hear what we do not hear, that we touch a perſon, whom we touch not, and that we eat with him, when he is not preſent; all

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this, I ſay, is incredible; eſpecially, when not one perſon only, but more than five hundred are ſuppoſed the dupes of ſuch a long ſpun illuſion.

It is therefore impoſſible that the diſciples were impoſed upon as to the matter of fact. Neither is it be thought that they wiſhed to impoſe upon us; or that they publiſhed this reſurrection, without being fully perſuaded of it. They announce the reſurrection of Chriſt in the very capital of the country, and on the ſpot where it happened. They announce it on the fiftieth day from his death; at a time, when it would have been eaſy to unveil the impoſture. They announce it to the ſupreme council of the nation, to the heads of the prieſts, who, by it, ſtood convicted of the enormous guilt of deicide: and they announce it boldly. Had they not been aſſured that Chriſt was truly riſen, would they have expoſed themſelves to the face of day? Would they have deſpiſed the menaces of the rulers of the people, whom this reſurrection rendered furious? St. Peter was four times laden with chains for it Would the man, who had trembled at the voice of a ſervant-maid, had the courage to preach Chriſt reſuſcitated, in the moſt awful aſſembly of the nation, had he not been convinced of the truth of what he affirmed? But ſo far from being convicted of falſhood, St Peter, by his firſt ſermon, converted three, and by his ſecond, five thouſand perſons. The number of thoſe, who were ocular witneſſes of his reſurrection, was above five hundred; and of theſe

five

five hundred not a ſingle one flinched from his evidence: all of them, from firſt to laſt, uniformly perſiſted in it, in defiance of the fear of torture, or the threats of impending death. Almoſt all of them ſuffered martyrdom in defence of this fact. Neverthleſs, they had not the ſmalleſt advantage, or worldly intereſt in maintaining it. They could gain nothing by it, for this life: on the contrary, they had every thing to loſe; and expoſed themſelves voluntarily to certain ignominy, and death.

You know, perhaps, my child, what perſecutions the Apoſtles and the other diſciples went through. Theſe perſecutions continued till their death; which, for the moſt part, was violent. But it would be, in the higheſt degree, abſurd to ſuppoſe that five hundred people conſpired, at the expence of their eaſe, their liberty and their life, to force upon the world an unheard of fact, which they knew to be a deception. If they did not believe that Jeſus Chriſt was reſuſcitated, they would have conſidered him as a cheat; and on this ſuppoſition, would never have ſacrificed their lives for him: for people are not diſpoſed to devote themſelves for a known impoſtor. The teſtimony of the Apoſtles is then convictive and indiſputable. For it is not poſſible to refuſe aſſent to ocular witneſſes, who, beholding their tortures with an undaunted eye, and writhing with agony, ſtill firmly exclaim; *What we annonnce to you we have ſeen with our eyes, we have heard with our ears, we have felt with our hands.*

Nor

Nor is this all. In confirmation of their evidence, the Apoſtles performed the moſt ſignal miracles. St. Peter, in a moment, reſtores to the uſe of his limbs a man of forty years of age, who from his birth had been a cripple, and known as ſuch to the whole city; and this miraculous cure he works, in the name of Chriſt reſuſcitated, in the temple, and in the preſence of a crowd of people. The ſick, of all deſcriptions are brought forth into the ſtreets, through which he his to paſs; and the ſole ſhadow of the Apoſtle reinſtates them in their health. Jeſus Chriſt therefore is riſen; ſince the invocation of his name only can operate ſuch wonders. Let us then finally conclude, that there is nothing more certain, nothing more unqueſtionable than the reſurrection of our Saviour.

Yes, my God! thou art truly reſuſcitated.—More than five hundred ocular witneſſes have borne teſtimony to this fact, and have ſealed it with their blood. The force only of truth and the ſtrength of thy grace could have induced them to publiſh, and to maintain with ſuch conſtancy, the reality of a fact, which otherwiſe would appear incredible. Fearful and timid during thy life, they become bold and courageous at the time, when, if thou wert not riſen again, thou could'ſt not have ſupported them. The incredulity of the Jews, ſo far from ſhaking, only tends to confirm my faith.—Their blindneſs had been long before predicted by the prophets. Thou thyſelf, O Lord! in foretelling

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ing thy reſurrection, foretoldeſt alſo the obduracy of this incredulous race, their ruin and their diſperſion Univerſally proſcribed, and wandering over the face of the globe, they carry to all nations, in ſpite of themſelves, the cleareſt proof of thy reſurrection How true, O God! are thy oracles! how certain! how worthy of credit! What thou propoſeſt to our belief are myſteries we own. But theſe myſteries are ſo authenticated by the moſt indubitable evidence, that it would be madneſs not to aſſent to them; and incredulity, in their regard, would be no leſs contrary to reaſon than oppoſite to faith.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould bewail the misfortune of them, that ſhut their eyes to ſo ſtrong a light.

LECTURE XXIII.

ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST; AND HIS SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, THE FATHER.

While they looked on, he was raiſed up; and a cloud received him out of their ſight. Acts i. 9. *He is on the right-hand of God.* 1. Peter iii. 22.

FORTY days after his reſurrection, Jeſus Chriſt aſſembled his diſciples on mount Olivet; and there, lifting up his hands, he bleſſed and quitted

quitted them. They ſaw him mount at firſt; but a cloud interpoſed, and prevented all further view of him. Thus he was raiſed up to heaven; where he now ſits, in glory, at the right hand of his Father.

When you are told, my dear Theophilus, that Chriſt is ſeated at the right-hand of God, do not imagine that God has a body. Theſe words are not to be underſtood in a plain and literal ſenſe.—They are figurative only, and adapted to our ideas. Under this image, the Holy Ghoſt would have us conceive that the humanity of Jeſus Chriſt is elevated, in heaven, to the moſt exalted degree poſſible of glory and power; and that he there repoſes, after his labors, as on the everlaſting ſeat of his empire. When a monarch aſſociates his ſon in his royalty, he ſeats him on a throne, aſide him; to ſhew that he would have him conſidered as his equal; and that it is his will that all the orders of the ſtate ſhould pay him ſimilar deference, as they do to himſelf. Now, the Scripture repreſents the Almighty ſeated on a throne, as the great King of heaven and earth. When therefore you are told that Chriſt is ſitting at the right-hand of God, the Father, you are to underſtand that, ſince he is equal to his Father, as God, he is alſo, as man, ſuperior to all creatures, both in effulgence of glory and plenitude of power; becauſe his ſacred humanity has the advantage of being united to the perſon of the Word.

Our Redeemer, amidſt his glory, is employed about us. He is attentive to our wants. He excutes in heaven the office of Mediator in our behalf He exhibits to his Father the ſcars of the wounds, received at his paſſion, to implore his mercy in favor of mankind. He is our Advocate and our Protector. *If any one hath ſinned*, ſays St. John, *we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the juſt.* Our ſins accuſe us at the tribunal of God: but Chriſt pleads our cauſe; and the voice of his blood is more efficacious to obtain mercy, than that of our crimes to call down vengeance. Jeſus Chriſt is in heaven as our King and our Lord. He has an abſolute power over us; not only becauſe he created, and ſtill preſerves us; but alſo becauſe he redeemed us by the effuſion of his blood.

We belong then to Chriſt as his inheritance and conqueſt. Whence St. Paul concludes that no one can live and die for himſelf: but that, whether we live or die, we appertain to the Lord. Jeſus Chriſt is in heaven in the quality of our High prieſt. This function he performed upon the altar of the croſs, when he offered himſelf to his Father as a victim for our ſins. He performs it likewiſe in heaven, where, at the right-hand of his Father, he preſents himſelf before him, to effectuate our peace.—And, as his prieſthood is eternal, he will be always able to ſave them, that approach to God through him and the introduction of his merits. *Seeing then that we have a High-prieſt, who hath aſcended into the heavens,*

heavens, Jeſus, the Son of God, let us go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy and ſupport *in ſeaſonable aid. For we have not a High-prieſt, who cannot compaſſionate our infirmities; but one tempted in all things, like ourſelves; though diveſted of ſin.*

Finally, Chriſt in heaven is our Head; the head of a body, of which we are the members.--The body, I ſpeak of, is the Church; and Chriſt, in regard to his Church, is what a head is to a body. He communicates life to it, and animates it with his ſpirit. Every grace, every good work, deſire or thought is derived from the plenitude of this our heaven-ſent Chief. "Jeſus Chriſt," ſays the Council of Trent, "diffuſes his ſpirit inceſſantly "in the hearts of the juſt; as a head imparts life "to it's members, or, a vine to it's branches."—Such is the noble dignity of a Chriſtian. He is a member of a body, of which the Son of God is the head, and which his ſpirit invigorates; becoming, by this means, a partaker of the Divinity. In conſequence thereof, Theophilus, you ſhould unite yourſelf to your Saviour, ſo as never, by ſin, to be ſeparated from him. You ſhould bear a tender affection to the Church, your mother; the body, as it were, of Chriſt, to which you have the happineſs to be ſo cloſely allied.

Thou didſt aſſure us, O Lord, before thy aſcenſion, that thou wert going to heaven, to prepare us a place. We hope then to follow, whither thou art gone beforehand. Thou art our head: and as,

by baptiſm, we are become thy members, we may confidently expect to be admitted into thy kingdom, and to have a ſhare in thy glory. Thy felicity is not different, or ſeparated from ours. This thou haſt declared in that prayer, which thou madeſt before thy paſſion: *Father I deſire that where I am, thoſe, whom thou haſt given me, ſhould alſo be.* Draw us to thyſelf, O God! Suffer us not to harbour any attachment to the earth, which is but the place of our exile. Make us continually aſpire after heaven, where thou thyſelf art ſitting, at the right hand of thy Father. Teach us to raiſe up our thoughts, and to fix our hearts there. May we ever conſider ourſelves as travellers here below; and may it be our moſt ardent wiſh to arrive at our true country, and to become inhabitants of that holy city, where thou reigneſt, and where thou haſt promiſed that we ſhall hereafter reign with thee. The glory, which ſurrounds thee, is the merited reward of thy profound humiliations. We freely accept whatever afflictions thou mayeſt ſend us, that, being united to thine, we may have part in thy bliſs. Can we be unwilling to ſubmit to the ſhort ſufferings of this life, when we reflect on the immenſe and eternal weight of glory, which thou haſt enſured them in the next?

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould cheriſh with all care the deſire of heaven.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXIV

JESUS CHRIST WILL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

It is he, who is appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. Acts x. 42.

OUR faith informs us that Chriſt is to be the judge of all mankind. *The Father judges no one*, ſays our Lord himſelf; but *he has given to his Son the power of judging*; that all may honor the Son, as they honor the Father. It is certain then that we ſhall all be ſummoned to the tribunal of Chriſt, there to render an account of our actions, during our abode in theſe veſſels of clay; and to receive the ſentence of eternal deſtiny, according to our merits.

It is the immutable decree of heaven that all ſhall die, and after death, ſhall be judged. But there are two ſorts of judgments The firſt, which we name the *particular* judgment, is paſſed upon each one, at the moment of his diſſolution. No ſooner ſhall the ſoul quit the body, than God will cite us to anſwer for all our actions, all our words, and all our thoughts. We ſhall each of us be examined in regard to the evil we may have done, and to the good we ſhall have omitted; and our uncertain doom be ſettled for an endleſs eternity. This *particular* judgment ſhall be executed in an inſtant. Such ſouls, as have nothing more to expiate, ſhall

be immediately received into the manſions of the bleſſed: and thoſe, that, by their ſins, ſhall have deſerved the fire of hell, ſhall inſtantly be plunged into it's avenging torments; in expectation of the general reſurrection, which ſhall reunite the ſoul and body; and thus ultimately complete the happineſs of the virtuous and the miſery of the wicked.

Then ſhall come the *general* judgment, in which the ſentence ſhall be ratified, that ſhall have been previouſly pronounced on each one. This *general* judgment ſhall be preceded by the moſt terrifying ſigns. Our Saviour himſelf draws the picture of it in the Goſpel. There ſhall be wars, famine, peſtilence and earthquakes. The ſun and moon ſhall be darkned. The ſtars ſhall fall from the firmament. The agitated ſea ſhall rage with ungovernable fury; and men ſhall wither with dread at the expectation of the evils to come, of which theſe are but the preludes. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the ſound of the laſt trumpet, the dead ſhall ariſe. The ſign of the Son of man, that is, a luminons and brilliant croſs, ſhall be diſplayed in the air; and Jeſus Chriſt ſhall viſibly deſcend, encircled in power and majeſty, to render to each one according to his deſerts. He ſhall be attended by his Angels, who, in obedience to his command, ſhall inſtantly ſeparate the good from the bad. Alas! What a diſmal ſeparation! How different the lot that awaits them! The elect ſhall be placed on the right, the reprobate

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on the left-hand of this majeſtic and ſovereign judge.

Then ſhall every conſcience be laid open to the eyes of the aſſembled univerſe. Nothing ſo ſecret at preſent, that ſhall not then be expoſed.—Then the juſt man, ſo long the object of deriſion and contempt, ſhall appear crowned with the good works, that he had carefully concealed: while the ſinner ſhall be covered with ſhame at the ſight of his crimes, which he had hidden with ſuch induſtry. Then ſhall vice appear in it's genuine colors, with all the hideouſneſs and infamy, that naturally belong to it. Ah! How great at that moment will be the joy of the virtuous, who ſhall have deſpiſed the enticements of the wicked, and reſiſted the impreſſion of their contagious example! How amply will they be compenſated for the battles they may have fought, and for the taunts they have borne with. But, on the other ſide, what deſpair will ſeize the libertine, on ſeeing expoſed to the glare of mid-day, to the view of heaven and earth the crimes, he thought covered with impenetrable darkneſs: when he beholds the perſons, at whom he had pointed his ridicule, numbered with the Saints and the children of God! What a horror will he not conceive for vice, which he now thinks ſo charming! But all this is only preparatory.

What will be our feelings, when we hear diſtinctly pronounced the awful ſentence of the judge! Every creature huſhed in ſilence, and in profound

expectation of the decifion of it's eternal doom, the Son of God ſhall ſpeak theſe conſolatory words to thoſe on his right-hand; *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, poſſeſs the kingdom which has been prepared for you, from the beginning of the world.* Then, turning to the reprobate: *Go*, he will ſay with the ſtrongeſt accents of indignation, *Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire.*—No ſooner ſhall this award have been thus ſolemnly pronounced, than the good ſhall be received into the embraces of their God, and begin their reign with him, to be continued throughout eternity; while the wicked ſhall be ingulfed in hell, for a duration without end. The heavens ſhall be then deſtroyed, the burning elements diſſolved and the earth, with all it's contents, conſumed by raging flames.

Prevent, my dear Theophilus, the dire effects of this dreadful judgment. Loſe no time in making your peace with God and recovering the grace of heaven. Follow the advice of your Saviour: *Take heed to yourſelves, leſt you be overcharged with the cares of life; and that day come upon you ſuddenly. For as a ſnare, it ſhall come upon all, that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, praying at all times, that you may be* accounted worthy to *eſcape the things, that are to come, and to ſtand* with confidence and firmneſs *before the Son of man.*

The day will aſſuredly come, O God! when thou wilt appear in all thy majeſty, and, judge the human race. For the wicked, a day of terror and

deſpair

deſpair: for the virtuous, a day of triumph and conſolation. And what will it be for me, O Lord! When I examine my paſt life, have I not reaſon to apprehend that I ſhall be of the number of the reprobate? With what face ſhall I appear before thee? How great will be my confuſion! The actions, I have concealed with ſo much care from the eyes of men, will be revealed to the univerſe, unleſs I efface them by a ſincere repentance. I ſhall be reſponſible to thee for each idle word: how much more for the wicked ſpeeches, I have either uttered or liſtened to? How terrible, O God! will be thy ſcrutiny! How dreadful to meet a judge, whoſe knowledge cannot be impoſed on, and whoſe juſtice is inflexible. Ah, dear Lord! enter not into judgement with thy ſervant. Try me not in thy indignation; nor ſuffer a ſoul to be loſt, for which thou haſt given thy life. The time of mercy is not yet elapſed. I may ſtill diſarm thy juſtice. Grant me O God! the grace to waſh away all my paſt ſins, by the tears of a true compunction; and to avoid all ſin, in future, by the ſenſe of thy awful judgments.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould often call to mind the terrors of the laſt judgment.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXV.

THE HOLY GHOST IS THE THIRD PERSON OF THE BLESSED TRINITY.

I will ſend you the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father. John xv. 26.

IT is not enough, Theophilus, to believe in God the Father Almighty, who created us, and in Jeſus Chriſt, his only Son, who redeemed us: we muſt moreover believe in the Holy Ghoſt, who ſolaces and ſanctifies us. For this reaſon, having propoſed to our faith the power of the Father and the myſteries regarding the Son, the Apoſtles, in the next place, ſet before us briefly what relates to the Holy Ghoſt.

It is therefore as neceſſary you ſhould be inſtructed in what concerns the Holy Ghoſt, as in what belongs to the Father and to his Son, Jeſus Chriſt. You muſt believe then with a firm faith, that in the Godhead there is a third perſon, whom we ſtyle the Holy Ghoſt: that this third perſon proceeds from the Father and the Son; and that he has the ſame nature and the ſame Divinity, as the two other perſons. Thus the Holy Ghoſt is in all things equal to them: he is eternal, omnipotent, infinite, as they are: he has the ſame perfections: in a word, he is the ſame God, as the Father and the Son. In his name, as in that of the two other perſons, we are baptiſed: and ſince he is the ſame God,

God, it is our duty to render him the ſame homage and ſervice. Hence the Holy Spirit is adored and conjointly glorified with the Father and the Son; as in that ſacred doxology, which we ſo frequently repeat; *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghoſt.*

To this divine Spirit is particularly attributed the bleſſing of our ſanctification: becauſe he is the Spirit of love, and diffuſes in our hearts that charity, which ſanctifies them. *Charity*, ſays St. Paul, *is ſpread within us by the Holy Ghoſt, who has been given to us.* It is from the Holy Ghoſt, then, that we receive our ſpiritual life; or rather it is he, who is the life of our ſouls, as the ſoul is the life of the body. The ſoul has no life but inaſmuch as it is united with this Spirit of God; inaſmuch as he reſides in, and animates her to action. Nothing can the ſoul do, that has any reference to God, or to it's own ſalvation, but by the impulſe and direction of this vivifying Spirit. He is the Spirit of adoption, by whom we are made the children of God; that ſacred ſeal, which is the certain pledge of our eternal inheritance. He is called in the Scripture *the Spirit of truth*, by which is meant that he is the ſource of all truth, and the director, to guide us to it. *When the Spirit of truth ſhall come*, ſays Chriſt, *he will teach you all truth.* In fact, he deſcended on the Apoſtles; and, in an inſtant, enlightened and imparted to them the knowledge of the moſt ſublime and awful truths. It is he, who, of old, ſpoke

ſpoke by the Prophets and Evangeliſts. By the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt, St. Paul tells us, they, that were deputed for this purpoſe, declared the will of heaven. Whence we learn that the inſpired writers were but the organs of the Holy Ghoſt, and that the words of the Scriptures are the words of God himſelf. With what reſpect therefore, ſhould we not receive them! And what a crime is it to profane them!

It is this Spirit of God, who is alſo our inſtructor, and who diſpels, by his light, the darkneſs of our ignorance. He ſhews us the road to heaven, and enables us to purſue it. *Thy Spirit*, ſays the prophet, *will conduct me into the right way*, the way that leads to ſalvation. He ſpeaks to us internally, to divert us from evil, and to inſpire us with the love of that good, which it is our duty to practiſe. Often has it been ſuggeſted to you, Theophilus, that virtue alone can conſtitute your happineſs; and often have you perceived riſing within you the deſire of adhering to it. This ſuggeſtion, this pious ſentiment is the voice of the Holy Ghoſt. Him, therefore, we reſiſt, when we reject ſuch intimations. Let us reflect that we cannot be deemed the children of God, unleſs we ſuffer ourſelves to be guided by the direction of his Spirit.

He is alſo denominated in Scripture the *Paraclete* or *Comforter*. *When the Paraclete ſhall come, he will bear teſtimony of me.* He is given us to conſole us under our ſufferings and afflictions. How prefer-

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able this conſolation to the flimſy comforts of the world! It renders light and tolerable the miſeries of life. It calms the ruffled paſſions, and inſtills into the mind the moſt enviable tranquillity. Adore then this ſacred Spirit, the author of all your good. Entreat him to communicate himſelf to you; to ſanctify your ſoul, and to repleniſh it with that unction and ſacred benignity, which renders virtue amiable, and it's practice ſweet and pleaſant.

Happy, O God! a thouſand times happy is the man, whom thou doſt animate, enlighten and conſole! His underſtanding is informed, and his will inflamed by the glowing ardor of charity. He experiences; yes, in the midſt of the ſharpeſt afflictions, he experiences a delicious peace; that peace, of God, which ſurpaſſes all comprehenſion, and which nothing can deprive him of. Come to me then, O bleſſed Spirit, Thou, who art the ineffable bond of union between the Father and Son. Come, Spirit of truth! Enlighten my mind, and diſpel it's darkneſs by the brightneſs of thy preſence. Guide my wandering ſteps, and conduct them, in all things, to the completion of thy will. Come, O Spirit of Charity! Sanctifying Spirit! Thou, who, by the miniſtry of the Apoſtles, didſt renew the face of the earth, give me a new heart, enkindle in it thy ſacred love, and conſume all my earthly droſs, by the ardor of it's heavenly flames. Come, thou Spirit of conſolation! and vouchſafe to aſſuage my pains, to calm my troubled ſpirits, and to fill me with thy holy

holy joy, the foretaſte of that ineffable bliſs, which thou deſigneſt for me in heaven.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould undertake nothing, without applying to the Holy-Ghoſt for his direction.

LECTURE XXVI.

ON THE FORMATION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

The Church was eſtabliſhed, walking in the fear of the Lord, and was filled with the conſolation of the Holy-Ghoſt. Acts ix. 31.

HAVING received the Holy-Ghoſt, the Apoſtles boldly ventured to announce the reſurrection of Chriſt, in the midſt of the people of Jeruſalem, whom they aſtoniſhed by their miracles. The effect of St. Peter's firſt ſermon was the converſion of three, that of his ſecond of five thouſand ſouls. The number of the faithful daily augmented: while theſe ſame proſelytes, regenerated by baptiſm and renewed by the Spirit of God, preſented to the world a ſpectacle of the moſt diſintereſted and perfect virtue. The Apoſtles, afterwards, preached the word of God, with like ſucceſs, throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria, From thence they paſſed into Syria and Aſia Minor; into Macedon and

and Greece; every where publiſhing the Goſpel, that is to ſay, the happy news of man's redemption, by the death of Jeſus Chriſt. St. Peter carried the faith to Rome, at that time the ſeat of empire and the capital of the world.

Out of this variety of nations, ſo different in manners and habits, was, in a ſhort time, formed a new people, a ſociety of men, united together by the profeſſion of the ſame faith, by the participation of the ſame ſacraments and by the communication of the ſame ſpiritual treaſures: all having the ſame inviſible head, Jeſus Chriſt, and the ſame viſible head, the Pope, the biſhop of Rome. This ſociety, or body, is called the Church of Chriſt; which was formed and eſtabliſhed in defiance of every obſtacle. The Jews oppoſed the Goſpel with inveterate obſtinacy, and perſecuted with rage the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. The Heathens, on the other ſide, were eager to ſuppreſs it. The moſt diſtinguiſhed among them, from the beginning, declared themſelves it's enemies. But, in ſpite of the fury of the Jews and the oppoſition of the Heathens; in ſpite of the power of the Emperors and the ſtill ſtronger influence of corruption and prejudice, the Apoſtles eſtabliſhed the Church of Chriſt in all the countries of the univerſe, and ſealed with their blood the truth, which they had taught. Thoſe, whom they had choſen to ſucceed them in the functions of their miniſtry, imitated their zeal; and, in like manner, tranſmitted to their ſucceſſors the faith,

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intruſted to them; which, by theſe means, has, from age to age, been handed down to our days in it's original purity.

Let us now make ſome obſervations, Theophilus, on the eſtabliſhment of Religion, which is ſo clearly the work of God. Repreſent to yourſelf twelve men of the loweſt claſs of ſociety, without money, without knowledge, without protection; to whom their maſter promiſes nothing, in this life, but perſecutions, torments and death. Such were the Apoſtles. Can one ſuppoſe that twelve men of this deſtitute deſcription, unleſs actuated by the Spirit of God, could have dared to undertake to alter the face of the univerſe, to convert the world, Greeks and Romans, Jews and Gentiles; and this, by propoſing to all of them alike myſteries the moſt difficult to be credited, and rules of conduct the hardeſt to be practiſed? Nevertheleſs, theſe twelve men, unſupported by human means, with no other weapons than their tongue, no other defence than their patience, not only dared to form a project ſo extraordinary, but even executed it. They preached a doctrine, that ſubjects the underſtanding, and lays a reſtraint upon the will. They preached this doctrine in the centre of the Roman empire; in towns the moſt rich and populous; in cities, where both knowledge and pleaſure had ſet up their earthly throne, at Antioch, Alexandria, Epheſus, Corinth, Athens, and Rome itſelf.—The whole world roſe up in arms againſt this

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ſtrange and novel doctrine. Every engine was ſet at play to ſtifle it in it's birth, and to prevent the further growth of it; baniſhment, confiſcation, priſons and tortures were employed. Notwithſtanding which, Chriſtianity, of all things in the world the moſt difficult and arduous to impreſs upon the mind, was univerſally eſtabliſhed by the ſole voice of perſuaſion; in defiance of whatever oppoſition could be made to it by human power, knowledge, paſſions, policy, intereſt and the moſt unreſtrained violence.

We muſt allow, my child, that natural means had no ſhare in this event, in which we cannot but ſee viſibly the finger of the Deity. For, in fine, either the Apoſtles wrought miracles, to convince the world of the truth of the doctrine they announced; or they converted the world without miracles. If they wrought miracles, it is clear that God himſelf preſided over this work. If they perſuaded the world to believe them independently of miracles, this only renders the proof more evident; ſince nothing but the power of heaven could have operated ſuch a perſuaſion, oppoſed as it was by obſtacles ſo numerous and ſo forcible. A conviction, ſuch as this, produced without miracles, would itſelf be the greateſt miracle, we can poſſibly conceive.

Thou hadſt foretold, O Chriſt! that, when thou ſhouldeſt be raiſed from the earth, that is, when thou ſhouldeſt be faſtened to the croſs, thou

wouldeſt attract all things to thee. We now ſee this prediction completely verified. The converſion of the world could only be the effect of thy omnipotence; and we cannot reflect upon it, without being ſtruck with aſtoniſhment. It is plain the execution of ſo arduous a project was impracticable to all the wiſdom and power of the earth. The very means, thou didſt employ, were hindrances to the deſign. Thou waſt pleaſed to ſelect twelve obſcure, indigent and illiterate men, to ſhew that thou didſt not need any human aſſiſtance, nor the aid of earthly force. Thou didſt chooſe the fooliſh of the world, to confound the wiſe; the weak of the world, to confound the ſtrong, and the moſt contemptible of the world, to confound the proud, and to humble human preſumption To thee then ſolely can we aſcribe the formation of the religion, that bears thy holy name: and thou wouldeſt appear ſingle and alone in it, to afford us an undoubted proof that this religion is divine. Yes, O Jeſus! it is thy work. To thee belongs the glory of the ſucceſs that attended it, which viſibly bears the mark of thy infinite power. I thank thee for having pleaſed to make it ſo eaſy and reaſonable. We muſt do violence to our natural ſentiments, before we can reject the ſtriking evidence, that demonſtrates it's veracity.

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The Practical Inference,

That we ought to admire the power of God in the converſion of the world.

LECTURE XXVII.

ON THE CONSTANCY OF THE MARTYRS IN DEFENCE OF THE FAITH OF CHRIST.

They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer for the name of Jeſus. Acts v. 41.

WE have ſeen, my Theophilus, that from the time the Chriſtian ſyſtem firſt made it's appearance, it began to be an object of general perſecution. But this perſecution of it did not end with the lives of it's primitive founders. For three hundred years, all the powers on earth continued to be leagued againſt it. During this interval of time, there were ten perſecutions, raiſed and authoriſed by the imperial edicts; and an innumerable multitude of Chriſtians, of both ſexes and of every age and condition, ſuffered torments and death, in defence of the Chriſtian faith.

One cannot read, without horror, the barbarous cruelties, inflicted on them, and the various tortures, invented to puniſh and torment them.—They were ſtretched upon a rack, with cords faſ-

tened to their hands and feet. They were hung up by their hands, with heavy weights tied to them; and, in this poſture, were beaten with rods, or whips tipped with iron. Their fleſh was torn from their bones with iron combs and hooks, ſo as to lay bare their very entrails. If they ſurvived theſe torments, to render their wounds more excruciating, ſalt and vinegar were poured into them, being reopened, as they were beginning to cloſe; and the Martyrs were remanded to priſon, to undergo further trials. Moreover, the gloomy priſons themſelves were another kind of puniſhment. They were the moſt dark and infected dungeons; where theſe victims of their faith were loaded with irons; weighty pieces of wood were tied round their necks, or ropes about their legs, to elevate and diſtend them, while they laid flat upon their backs. Sometimes, their tormentors ſtrewed the floors of theſe priſons with fragments of broken glaſs, and rolled the Martyrs on them, naked as they were and univerſally mangled. At other times, they ſuffered their wounds to putrify, and let them periſh with hunger. Now and then, they fed them, and dreſſed their ſores; but only to reſerve them for ſome freſh ſcene of cruelty. Generally, they were reſtricted from all kind of intercourſe with others: becauſe it was known that, in this condition, they frequently made converts, not only among the infidels, but of their very jailers and guards. The puniſhment, which terminated theſe tortures, was either to be behead-

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ed, burnt alive, caſt into the ſea, or devoured by wild beaſts

Amidſt the longeſt and keeneſt ſufferings the Martyrs continued firm and inflexible; and their very torments ſeemed to add to their courage, and to increaſe their reſolution. Neither was it the ſtronger ſex only that diſplayed this invincible conſtancy: delicate women and tender children were alſo ſharers in this heroic fortitude: ſo powerful was the grace of Chriſt, which animated and ſupported them. Eccleſiaſtical hiſtory furniſhes examples of endurance and courage, ſuperior not only to human ſtrength, but even to admiration. We cannot read, without aſtoniſhment, what the Martyrs of Lyons and Vienna ſuffered under the emperor Marcus Aurelius; what Euſebius relates of the Martyrs of Paleſtine, and Soſomones of thoſe of Perſia; what we find in the original acts of the Martyrs of Africa; among whom, two women of high birth, St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, diſtinguiſhed themſelves eminently, notwithſtanding the infirmity and weakneſs of their ſex. All theſe generous champions endured with unconquerable patience ſuch inflictions, as it makes us ſhudder to relate; and ſome ſuffered them even with alacrity and joy. They went voluntarily to meet them, and only apprehended being ſpared. Hear the letter, which St. Ignatius, biſhop of Antioch, wrote to the Chriſtians at Rome, at the time, when he was actually upon his way to that city, there to be expoſed

to the ferociouſneſs of wild beaſts. "I fear" he tells them, "your kindneſs ſhould be a detriment "to me. I conjure you not to love me unſeaſon- "ably. Permit me to become the food of thoſe "wild and ſavage animals, that will ſend me to my "God. I am the wheat of the Lord, and I ſhall "be ground by the teeth of beaſts, to be made the "bread of Jeſus Chriſt.—I hope I ſhall find them "ready. I will encourage them, that they may de- "vour me quickly; and that they may not fear "touching me, as they have others before me. If "they refuſe it, I will force them. Pardon me: I "know what is for my good. Now I begin to be "a follower and diſciple of Chriſt. No creature, "whether viſible or inviſible ſhall prevent my "coming to him. Let fire, the croſs, beaſts, the "ſeparation of my bones, the diſmemberment of "my body or whatever other torments be my por- "tion, provided I do but enjoy my beloved Jeſus "Chriſt."

You here ſee the eagerneſs, with which this holy man longed to give his life for his Saviour. You know that St. Laurence, while broiling on the grid-iron, deſired his executioners to turn him on the other ſide; becauſe he no longer felt the fire on the one, that was already burnt. What a language to uſe amidſt the moſt agoniſing tortures! Whence did theſe heroes of Chriſtianity derive ſuch invinci- ble courage, as made them ſcoff at pain and defy death in all it's ſhapes? Who gave them that for-

titude

titude, ſuperior to whatever the moſt tyrannic cruelty could invent? Doubt not. Such magnanimity and firmneſs could come from God alone. You muſt yourſelf be ſenſible that it is not natural to man; and, of courſe, that a divine power was requiſite to ſupport their native weakneſs. Wherefore, the religion, which the Martyrs thus cemented with their blood, is deſcended from heaven. Moſt aſſuredly it is. Never could it have ſubſiſted, had not an Almighty hand ſuſtained it amidſt ſuch reiterated aſſaults. But God enabled it to triumph over the rage and malice of it's enemies: and all their efforts, which, in a natural way, were more than enough to cruſh, only ſerved to confirm it. The hotter the perſecutions, the greater progreſs it made. The blood of the Martyrs was as a fruitful ſeed, that produced daily new Chriſtians; and the whole world, after perſecuting the diſciples of Chriſt with the utmoſt virulence and malignity, at length bowed humbly to their creed, and embraced the Chriſtian faith.

Thou waſt pleaſed, O God! to permit thy infant Church to be ſo long and ſo cruelly perſecuted, in order to ſhew more conſpicuouſly the ſtrength of thy powerful arm. Thou ſufferedſt the univerſe to arm againſt her, while patience was her ſole defence. Thou toldeſt thy diſciples that they ſhould be as lambs amidſt wolves; and this leſſon, ſo difficult in practice, they made the rule of their conduct. An entire legion was ſeen to ground their

arms, and permit themſelves to be maſſacred, without reſiſtance or oppoſition. The wolves they converted by diſplaying the weakneſs of the lamb. The cruelty of the tyrants was forced to give way to the unconquerable firmneſs and patience of the Martyrs. Thou alone, O Lord! couldſt dictate ſuch extraordinary means. Thou alone couldſt give ſucceſs to them. It was thou thyſelf, who didſt fight in theſe generous champions. It was thou. who didſt inſpire them, not only with conſtancy under the moſt excruciating torments, but even with a deſire and a longing to ſuffer for thy ſake Strengthened by thy grace, the weaker ſex, the tendereſt age deſpiſed death, and tired out the cruelty of their bloody executioners. The heathens themſelves, witneſſes of ſuch fortitude, confeſſed thy hand; and compelled to admire a religion, which taught mankind to riſe ſuperior to the moſt terrible trials, declared themſelves Chriſtians, and followers of thee.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould beg of God a ſhare in the faith and courage of the Martyrs.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXVIII.

ON THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH.

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptiſm.—You are built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone. Epheſ. ii, 20. & iv, 5.

WHAT is meant by the Church is the ſociety or aſſemblage of all the faithful, united in the ſame body, and governed by lawful paſtors; of which ſociety Jeſus Chriſt is the ſupreme head, and the Pope, as biſhop of Rome, his vicegerent and repreſentative. It is eaſy to diſtinguiſh the true Church of Chriſt from the many different pretenders to this venerable name. For ſhe has four diſtinctive marks, that belong to her ſolely.

Firſt, ſhe is *One*; in her faith, in her ſacraments, in her members and in her head. All the faithful, in every part of the globe, profeſs the ſame belief. What the Church teaches to day, ſhe always did, and always will teach. The faith, my dear Theophilus, which is preached to ourſelves, is preached at Rome, in Aſia, in Africa, and in America. There is every where an uniformity; every where a profeſſion of believing whatever the Deity has revealed, and the Church propoſes, by the mouth of her paſtors. This is an undeniable fact; a fact of public notoriety, and which the intercourſe, that ſubſiſts between the different quarters of the world, inconteſtably evinces. The faithful, throughout

throughout the univerſe, partake likewiſe of the ſame ſacraments. Baptiſm, Confirmation, the Euchariſt, Penance and the other ſacred rites are adminiſtered to them every where; and every where theſe ſacraments are received, as the means ordained by Chriſt for our ſanctification and holineſs. The faithful alſo, that are ſpread over the wide extent of the globe, have univerſally among them a communication of prayers and ſpiritual advantages.—Each member has a ſhare in the prayers of his brethren. For which reaſon we ſay not, *give* me *this day* my *daily bread*, as praying for ourſelves only; but *give* us *this day* our *daily bread*, as offering our petitions for the common neceſſities of all. Finally, the faithful have all one and the ſame inviſible head in heaven, who is Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord; and one and the ſame viſible head on earth, the ſucceſſor of St. Peter and the repreſentative of Chriſt. Wherefore, to be a member of this Church, we muſt believe, as you may ſuppoſe, all that ſhe teaches: whoever preſumes to alter her doctrine, belongs not to the Church. We muſt participate in the ſame ſacraments: whoever diminiſhes from, or adds to them, belongs not to the Church. We muſt be united to the body and ſociety of the faithful by a communication of ſpiritual bleſſings: therefore, thoſe, that are excommunicated, belong not to the Church. And laſtly, we muſt pay obedience to our legitimate paſtors: whoever

whoever refuſes to acknowledge the Pope for the vicar of Jeſus Chriſt, belongs not to the Church.

The ſecond characteriſtic, that diſtinguiſhes the true Church from every other congregation, is that of *Holineſs and Sanctity.* Not that each individual of her ſociety is ſanctified and holy: but becauſe ſhe is the ſole depoſitary of the means of ſalvation; becauſe ſhe alone produces Saints; and becauſe her inviſible head, the fountain of all ſanctity, perpetuates in her that nation of Saints, which is deſtined to people the heavenly Jeruſalem.

Thirdly, the true Church is *Catholic or Univerſal:* that is, ſhe is under no limitation, either as to time or to place: an advantage, that cannot be claimed by ſuch, as have ſeparated themſelves from her.—She embraces all times: for the Church has ever ſubſiſted without any interruption, and ſhe will continue to ſubſiſt till the conſummation of ages, according to the promiſe of her heaven-ſent author. On the contrary, all other ſocieties bear, as we may ſay, upon their front the marks of their novelty.—We know the date of their riſe. Before the year of Chriſt, for inſtance, 1517, the Lutheran ſyſtem did not exiſt: much leſs the many others, that ſince have ſhot up, and ſprung forth from it. The Church includes all places. Her children and members inhabit every region of the earth; whereas, all other ſocieties are more or leſs reſtricted; and the name of Catholic, which ſhe has always been in poſſeſſion of,

of, is, without heſitation, confirmed to her by the avowal of her ſtrongeſt opponents.

Laſtly, the fourth diſtinctive mark, that characteriſes the true Church, is her being *Apoſtolical*: by which is meant that ſhe was founded by the Apoſtles, and is ſtill governed by their ſucceſſors: inſomuch that there is no catholic biſhop, who does not receive his miſſion, and hold his authority from the Apoſtles, or from them, that the Apoſtles originally delegated; a ſucceſſion deſcended to our days without break or interruption. Other bodies of people, by forſaking the true Church, have deprived themſelves of this ſucceſſion: thus, the Lutherans cannot carry the origin of their claim, but to the time of their founder; that is to ſay, to a date of two hundred and ſeventy years. The chain of their ſucceſſion does not reach beyond that epoch. Whereas, Pope Pius the ſixth, the actual biſhop of Rome, by an uninterrupted ſeries of popes, to whom he has duly ſucceeded, can trace back his miſſion to the days of St Peter, the conductor and head of the apoſtolical college.

By the features here traced, Theophilus, you will eaſily diſcern and recogniſe your mother. The true Church is viſible, and within the reach of every eye: and we need but open ours to diſcover and aſcertain her. We ſee around us a ſociety of men, who profeſs the ſame faith, who believe the ſame myſteries, who partake of the ſame ſacraments, and

who

who acknowledge the ſame authority, together with it's divine origin, in her miniſters and ſervants.

What thanks, O my God! do I not owe thee, for having made me a member of that Church, of which thou thyſelf art the head, and wherein thou haſt placed the fountain of ſalvation. Thou haſt brought me into that ark, which thou haſt appointed for our refuge from the waters of the deluge. How much ought I to value this happineſs, which to me is a ſource of infinite bleſſings! In this holy Church, I am fed with the bread of thy word; I am purified; I am ſuſtained; I am ſanctified with the ſacraments, of which thou haſt made her the depoſitary. I partake of the prayers, which this pious mother offers to thee in behalf of her children. I am conducted by paſtors, whoſe voice if I follow, I ſhall never go aſtray. Thou haſt witheld this grace, O Lord! from ſo many nations, that as yet know thee not; and from ſo many others, who, having heretofore received thy faith, have now rejected and loſt it. Divided from thy Church, they are deprived of ſpiritual life; and are withered, as branches lopped off from the trunk, that gave them nouriſhment and vigor. Preſerve me, O Lord! from this misfortune. Bind ſtill cloſer the bonds, that attach me to thy Church. Give me a perfect docility to the paſtors, who govern her. In her boſom I became thy child; and in her boſom I will live and breathe out my laſt. Thou wilt acknowledge

knowledge me for thy child, while I own her for a mother, and obey her as ſuch.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt thank Almighty God for having made us children of his Church.

LECTURE XXIX.

ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH.

He has given paſtors to his Church; that we may no more be children, nor carried about with every wind of doctrine. Epheſ. iv. 11, 14.

JESUS Chriſt gave to the paſtors of his Church the power of teaching, and of governing the faithful in the order of ſalvation. This authority is wholly ſpiritual, and reſides only in the paſtors, that is, in the Pope, who is the head of the univerſal Church, and in the Biſhops, as the inheritors and ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles. *Go*, ſays Chriſt to the latter, *and inſtruct all nations; teaching them to obſerve whatever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the conſummation of the world.* Here we find, my dear child, that our Lord charged his Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors, to the end of time, to teach the world what he himſelf had taught them; that is to ſay, the myſteries of faith and the rules

rules of morality. We ſee that he promiſed to aſſiſt them in the execution of this office, as long as the world ſhould continue By virtue of this promiſe, the Church is infallible in her doctrine, both as to faith and to morals. Having Jeſus Chriſt with her, who is truth itſelf; being at all times enlightened and directed by his Spirit, who is the Spirit of wiſdom, ſhe can never teach what is wrong. If ſhe could, ſhe would ceaſe to be the Church of Chriſt, and to have his Spirit for her guide. Whence St. Paul juſtly ſtyles her the immoveable pillar and foundation of truth.

Hence let us draw this inference, Theophilus, that the body of our ſpiritual paſtors can never err, or be deceived in what relates to faith and morality; and that the deciſions, which they form, whether tending to expoſe the different articles of faith, or to cenſure ſuch errors, as combat it's tenets, are infallible verdicts, which all the faithful muſt ſubmit to. The Church is the chair of truth; the ſeat of God himſelf. In his name ſhe ſpeaks to men, and by his authoritative order. When we ſubmit our underſtanding to the deciſions of the Church, it is to God himſelf we render the homage of our faith. *Whoever hears you*, ſays Chriſt to his Apoſtles, *hears me*; *and whoever deſpiſes you, deſpiſes me. He, that will not hearken to the Church, let him be conſidered by you as a heathen or a publican.* Upon this ground, the Apoſtles, acquainted with the privilege, they had received from Jeſus Chriſt, uſhered

uſhered in their firſt reſolve with theſe remarkable words; *It has ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to us*: to give us to underſtand that their judgment and determination was that of the Deity himſelf. In fact, it was neceſſary that Chriſt ſhould impart to his Church this infallible authority. Was there not a deciſory tribunal, ultimately to reſolve ſuch queſtions, as ariſe on matters of faith, we ſhould be led aſtray by our conceptions; and there would be an end to uniformity and conſiſtence of belief. Was not this tribunal infallible; it's deciſions might be ſuſpected, and the faithful would remain in a wavering uncertainty, expoſed to be toſſed about by every wind of innovation. Wherefore, it became the wiſdom of Chriſt to ſecure to his Church the privilege of being preſerved from the impoſition of errors.

Secondly, Jeſus Chriſt has given to his paſtors the power of governing the faithful; that is, of making laws for their rule of conduct, in what concerns the ſervice of God and the regulation of good morals; and of inflicting ſpiritual penalties on the indocile and refractory. The new teſtament is full of paſſages, that inculcate this point. St Paul, addreſſing himſelf to the elders of the Church of Epheſus, ſays; *Take heed to yourſelves, and to the flock, wherein the Holy Ghoſt hath placed you biſhops, to rule the Church of God.* Therefore, biſhops are appointed to govern and direct the faithful. Therefore, to reſiſt their authority is to reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt. The

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ſame Apoſtle declares, in his epiſtle to the Corinthians, that he is in poſſeſſion of the means to puniſh the diſobedient. And, in fact, theſe means he made uſe of on the perſon of the ſcandalous Corinthian, whom, for a time, he cut off from the body of the Church, by a ſentence of excommunication. This power of excommunicating is comprehended in theſe words, which Chriſt addreſſed to his Apoſtles: *Whatever you ſhall bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven; and whatever you ſhall looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed alſo in heaven.* From theſe words, it has been always underſtood that the ſentence, by which paſtors remove a ſinner from the ſociety of the faithful, will be ratified in heaven by the Son of God himſelf; and in like manner, when they releaſe and readmit him by abſolution. Chriſt uſes the words *binding and unbinding*, becauſe the excommunicated perſon, being delivered over to Satan, becomes his vaſſal and ſlave. He is fettered with his chains; nor can he otherwiſe be emancipated, than by the power, that bound him.

Reſpect then this authority, which is derived from God himſelf. Endeavour to acquire a knowledge of all the Church teaches, that you may ſubject your underſtanding to it; and of all ſhe commands, that you may regulate your conduct by it. Her doctrine is ever true; her laws ever wiſe, and her manners ever holy.

Thou haſt eſtabliſhed paſtors in thy Church, O God! for our inſtruction and government. Thou

haſt annexed to their precepts the privilege of infallibility, by promiſing to be with them to the end of the world; whereby thou haſt prevented and ſettled all our doubts. It is thy will that all ſhould come to the knowledge of the truth; and thou haſt afforded an eaſy means, within the reach of all mankind, to diſcover it with certainty.—Without this, we muſt have continued in a deplorable ignorance; or, at beſt, under a cruel incertitude, as to what it imports us moſt to know. What acknowledgments do we not owe thee, for having thus ſecured us againſt error, and all the anxiety of doubt. In adhering to thy Church, I am not afraid of going aſtray. When I hear her voice, my mind is at eaſe. Relying on thy promiſes, I believe, without demur, whatever ſhe propoſes; I reject, without heſitation, whatever ſhe condemns. I am convinced that in liſtening to her, it is thyſelf I liſten to. Far from me be that ſpirit of pride, which makes us revolt againſt an authority, erected by thyſelf. Preſerve me from ſuch blindneſs.—Teach me to reſpect, and to obſerve all her precepts: and make me, in every regard, obedient to the voice of this holy mother, whom thou haſt appointed to conduct us in the way of ſalvation.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt ſubmit both our underſtanding and our will to the deciſions of the Church.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXX.

ON THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

There are many members, though one body.—That the members may be mutually careful one for another. You are the body of Chriſt and members of each other. 1. Cor. xii. 20, 25, 27.

ALL the numerous believers, that compoſe the Chriſtian Church, are united together, and form but one body, of which Chriſt is the head.—Charity, the bond of this indiſſoluble union, produces among them a communication of all ſpiritual and religious advantages. And this, my Theophilus, is the meaning of thoſe words, *the Communion of Saints.*

All the faithful are termed Saints: becauſe they are all ſanctified by baptiſm, and are all called to be holy. The ſpiritual bleſſings, that are common to them all, are the infinite merits of the ſufferings of Chriſt, the interceſſion of the bleſſed Virgin and the Saints in heaven, the ſacraments, the prayers and other good works, that are performed in the Church. Of all theſe ſpiritual advantages a treaſure is formed, that appertains to the whole body; of which each individual member has his ſhare, according to the diſpoſition and ſtate he is in. Is he in a ſtate of grace? He then partakes fully of all the bleſſings and advantages, that are collected in the Church. Is he under the guilt of

mortal ſin? He at leaſt obtains help to withdraw him from that wretched ſtate. This communion in religious bleſſings is the neceſſary conſequence of the unity of the Church; in which, as in a family, all work for the common intereſt, and all proportionably partake of the fruits of the common labor.

St. Paul compares the Church to a human body: and nothing, in fact, can give us a more juſt idea of *the Communion of Saints*. The body is compoſed of many members; and each of theſe members has it's particular ſtated office. They have all one common head, one common ſoul, one common life; and all together make but one body. The functions of each member, as well as it's advantages, are for the good of the whole: all concur to the ſame end, viz. the welfare of the body. The eyes ſee, the ears hear, the hands act, the feet walk for the reſt of the frame. In a word, all the members contribute to the good of one another, and afford each other aſſiſtance under their reſpective demands. In like manner, in the Church, the faithful, breathing by the ſame ſpirit, and living under the ſame head, are united with each other in all their different actions. Each individual of them prays, works and merits for the common good of the whole: and, at the ſame time, he has his ſhare in the labors, in the virtues and in the ſupplications of the Church at large. And as all her children work and pray for one another, ſharing each others merits by a mutual participation: ſo

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ſhe offers the common victim, the body and blood of Jeſus Chriſt, for the general good of all, wherever it is immolated.

But to profit by theſe advantages, one muſt be a member of the Church. Thoſe, that have ſeparated themſelves from her, by rejecting her creed; and ſuch, as ſhe has thrown from her boſom by a ſentence of excommunication, have no part in the bleſſings, which this communion affords. Nay, to enjoy them completely, one muſt be a living member of the Church; that is, in a ſtate of grace, as we term it, with a conſcience undefiled by the guilt of mortal ſin. Sinners, in whom the Holy Ghoſt does not reſide by ſanctifying grace, are indeed members of the Church; but they are dead members: and if ſo, how can they pretend to equal advantages with the living? A dead arm, though ſtill unſeparated from the human body, can receive neither nouriſhment nor motion from ſuch connexion. Nevertheleſs, ſinners fail not to draw great advantages from this union. For they ſtill belong to a ſociety, where truth, charity, ſalvation and the means conducting to it are undoubtedly to be found. A ſinner, it is true, is dead, but while united to the body of the Church, he may be recovered to life by the aid of her prayers, who never ceaſes to beg for him this ineſtimable bleſſing.

But beſides this union of the faithful on earth, there is another union, ſtill more general, between the Saints reigning in Heaven, the ſouls ſuffering

in purgatory and the Church militant in this world. We rejoice at the happineſs of the Saints in glory, we join with them in bleſſing God for it, and we beg their interceſſion, at the throne of mercy, where they ſtand. On their ſide, they love us as their brethren, and aſſiſt us by their prayers. We communicate with the ſouls in purgatory, by offering up our ſupplications, our alms, our good works, to obtain comfort for them under their ſufferings and a diminution of their pains.

How great, O Lord! are the advantages, how deſirable the bleſſings, which thy ſervants enjoy in the boſom of thy Church! The cloſe connexion among them renders them common to all. He, that is rich, divides his abundance with the more needy and indigent. He, that is ſtrong, ſhares his power with the feeble and weak. Nothing more encouraging to me, than this conſolatory thought. I ſhould be much to be pitied, had I only my own good works to preſent to thee. But all holy ſouls pray for me: do penance for me: their meritorious actions are all mine: the gifts of thy Spirit, which they poſſeſs, belong to me: the fervor of their prayers ſupplies the tepidity of mine: the ſolidity of their virtue compenſates my levity. Moved with the mournful ſighs, which their charity addreſſes to thee in my behalf, thou wilt grant me, O God! an increaſe of thy grace. Theſe ſpiritual riches I value more than all the treaſures of the world. Suffer me not to loſe the ſmalleſt part of them

them by neglect. But on the contrary, enable me to draw every poſſible advantage from them, by a conſtant attention to preſerve myſelf in thy grace.

The Practical Inference.

That we ought to eſteem ourſelves happy in being partakers of the ſpiritual riches and bleſſings of the Church.

LECTURE XXXI.

ON THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

Through Jeſus Chriſt, forgiveneſs of ſins is preached unto you. Acts xiii. 36.

THE Catholic Church alone affords us this ſolid comfort of the remiſſion of our ſins. God grants this grace to them only, that are his children by baptiſm. None, who are out of the pale of the Church, ſuch as infidels, who have not been received into it; nor the refractory and excommunicated, who, through their miſconduct, are juſtly expelled it, can have any ſhare in this invaluable bleſſing, while they continue in that ſtate. As for you, my dear Theophilus, you enjoy this advantage.

You have already received, at your baptiſm, the forgiveneſs of original ſin; that ſin, in which

we are all born. But the mercy of God is not confined to this. As it happens, and that alas! too generally, that we ſoon forfeit the innocence, acquired by baptiſm, he has inſtituted a ſacrament, to do away the ſins, we commit after that period, viz. the ſacrament of Penance. To this we may have recourſe as often as we have occaſion. God is, at all times, diſpoſed to forgive our ſins, provided we approach this ſacrament with a ſincere contrition for them. Neither is there any ſin ſo enormous, but it may thus be happily effaced. Although you were guilty of the moſt atrocious crimes; although the number of them ſurpaſſed that of the hairs of your head, you might ſtill obtain the pardon of them by the ſacrament of Penance.

But we are not to imagine that this forgiveneſs of ſin is the conſequence of our own merits. It is to be attributed to thoſe of Chriſt only, our Mediator and Saviour. The promiſe of God to remit our guilt is the pure effect of his mercy; and this promiſe is the ſole reſource and refuge of ſinners, and the ground of their confidence. You muſt be ſenſible, my child, that God alone can forgive ſin. When the prieſt, therefore, pronounces over you the ſentence of abſolution, it is God, that acquits you, by the agency of his miniſter. The prieſt is but the inſtrument, which the Deity employs to operate this great effect. He acts in the name of God only, and by virtue of a power received from above. *We*

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are the miniſters of God, ſays St. Paul, *and the diſpenſers of his myſteries.*

That the Almighty has imparted this power to the paſtors of his Church not a doubt can be admitted. Jeſus Chriſt addreſſed the following words to his Apoſtles, and to their ſucceſſors in the apoſtolic miniſtry; *Receive ye the Holy Ghoſt: whoſe ſins you ſhall forgive, they are forgiven; and whoſe ſins you ſhall retain, they are retained.* Hence, it is obvious that our Saviour communicated to his Apoſtles the power, with which he himſelf was veſted, to remit every kind of ſin; and that he promiſed to ratify the ſentence in heaven, which they ſhould pronounce upon earth. From the Apoſtles this privilege paſſed to the biſhops and to the prieſts, deputed by them, for the adminiſtration of the ſacred office. What price you ought to ſet upon this ſignal bleſſing you would eaſily comprehend, did you but reflect on the ſtate of them, who, having offended the Deity, ſhould have no reſource or means to effect their reconciliation. On this head, I will tell you what a perſon, engaged from his infancy in the hereſy of Calvin, ſaid to a Catholic, to whom he opened his heart. The former, in a converſation on this ſubject, thus addreſſed himſelf to the latter. How happy, my friend, are you in the tenets of your belief. When one has been ſo unfortunate as to offend the Deity, one readily finds the means of appeaſing a troubled conſcience. If one repent of the crime committed, and confeſs it, the ſin is

forgiven

forgiven; and peace of mind ſucceeds to remorſe and diſquietude. But with us, this conſolation is unknown: one is compelled to bear for life the heavy weight of one's guilt. I own to you that the ſins of my youth have never ceaſed to oppreſs me. The remembrance of thoſe ſins, which have not been effaced, haunts me every where, and has hitherto embittered all the comforts of life, ſince I have nothing to afford me any confidence of pardon.

Learn from this, Theophilus, the high advantages a ſoul poſſeſſes, when ſhe has in her power the means of reconciliation. What a ſatisfaction to be able to ſay to herſelf: It is true that I have ſinned, and have been deſerving of hell: but through the mercy of God, I am now abſolved from my crimes, and have reaſon to hope they are effaced and forgiven. Be cautious, however, not to abuſe the divine goodneſs; nor to take from thence occaſion of ſinning more freely. What! Would you offend your God, becauſe he is diſpoſed to pardon you? Would you be wicked, becauſe he is infinitely kind? Be not impoſed upon. This abuſe of God's mercy is the crime, that moſt irritates him: and this ſame Deity, who forgives all, that apply rightly diſpoſed to the ſacrament of Penance, may, perhaps, cut you off in your ſins, without allowing you time for repentance. How many young people has death ſurpriſed in their ſins! And

And what aſſurance have you of not meeting with the like fate?

Unhappy, O God, ſhould I be, was I to ſuffer paſſion ſo to prevail over me, as to abandon myſelf to ſin, in the hope of confeſſing and obtaining forgiveneſs. I will remember thy mercy: and how, indeed can I forget it, after ſo frequently experiencing it's tender effects! I will remember thy mercy, to animate myſelf to ſerve thee with greater fidelity; and not to offend thee with a more audacious aſſurance. Yes, O Lord! thy mercy is infinite. How often haſt thou ſhewn it, in regard to me! What an accumulation of crimes haſt thou not repeatedly pardoned me! Thou mighteſt have abandoned me to the rigor of thy juſtice, whoſe ſeverity I merited. But thou hadſt compaſſion on me, O my God! Thou didſt ſeek me, thou didſt recall me; and when I returned to thee, thou didſt receive me with the affection of a parent, and overlook my miſconduct. I will remember thy mercy, to bleſs and not to abuſe it. I will remember it, to call to mind what a value thou haſt hitherto, and doſt ſtill, ſet upon my ſoul. I will remember it, to learn how much I am indebted to thy love. Such, O gracious God! ought to be the ſentiments of my heart, at the ſight of thy mercy; and ſuch ſhall be the reflections, it ſhall in future inſpire me with.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould praiſe the divine goodneſs, for having afforded us the means of effacing our ſins.

LECTURE XXXII.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

Behold, I will open your graves, and will bring you out of your ſepulchres. Ezech. xxxvii. 12.

THE future reſurrection of our bodies is an article of faith. All mankind ſhall die; and ſhall riſe again in the ſelfſame bodies, as thoſe, in which they lived. Theſe bodies, put under ground, ſhall experience corruption, and be reduced to their native duſt. But whatever changes they may undergo, their aſhes ſhall be again united, and reanimated by the quickening ſpirit and breath of the Almighty.

There is no point of the Chriſtian belief more plainly delivered by the ſacred writings, nor more firmly ſupported by the faith of all ages, than the one now before us. It is a truth, that always has been known. The holy Job, contemporary with the primitive Patriarchs, profeſſes this belief. *I know*, he ſays, *that my Redeemer liveth, and at the laſt day I ſhall riſe out of the earth. And I ſhall be clothed again*

again with my ſkin; *and in my fleſh I ſhall ſee my God*; *whom I myſelf ſhall ſee, and no other, and my eyes ſhall behold.* But it is principally in the new teſtament that this truth is clearly illuſtrated. *The time ſhall come*, ſays Chriſt, *when they, that are in their graves, ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God*; *and thoſe, who have done good works, ſhall riſe, to reap the fruits of them*; *and ſuch, as have done evil, to be condemned to eternal puniſhment. In a moment*, St. Paul tells us, *in the twinkling of an eye, at the ſound of the trumpet the dead ſhall ariſe, to die no more* As all incurred death by one only man, our parent Adam; ſo ſhall all riſe again, through one ſole man, our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

This reſurrection ſhall be general. All, great and little, good and bad; they that have lived before us, even from the beginning of the world, they that at preſent are living, and they that ſhall live after us, all alike ſhall die; and riſe again at the laſt day, in the very ſame bodies, as they quitted at their diſſolution. The omnipotence of the Deity will operate this miracle; who, as he originally made whatever is out of nothing, will eaſily bring together our diſperſed and ſcattered limbs, and reunite them to our ſouls. For it cannot be more difficult to the infinite power of God to reſtore our bodies to life, than it was to create and vivify them at firſt. An image of this reſurrection we have every year before our eyes. Are not the trees, in appearance, dead during the ſeaſon of winter? And do they not ſeem to come to life again with the

the returning ſpring? Seeds of every ſort, that are buried in the earth, corrupt there and die: yet they ſhoot forth again, and that more beautiful than before. It is the ſame with the human body; which is as a kind of ſeed, that is ſown and ſprings up afreſh, renewed and invigorated.

The bodies of the juſt ſhall be no longer, as at preſent, material and groſs. They ſhall ſhine like the ſun. They ſhall be exempt from all ſufferings and the ſhadow of pain: they ſhall be active and ſtrong, as the body of our Redeemer, when riſen from the tomb. The virtuous, who are his children, ſanctified by grace, and incorporated with him by faith, ſhall riſe in a manner ſimilar to him. Jeſus Chriſt will transform their abject and vile bodies; and render them like to his own, impaſſible and glorious. The body, that partook of the good, which the ſoul performed, while united together, ſhall alſo partake of it's happineſs. The wicked ſhall likewiſe riſe; but their bodies ſhall not participate in thoſe excellent qualities. They ſhall riſe; but ſhall not be altered, like the body of Chriſt. They ſhall riſe: but to torments, eternal in their duration, and inconceivable in their nature. The immortality of their bodies ſhall only ſerve to render their puniſhment everlaſting and their wretchedneſs irremediable. The whole multitude of them, that ſleep in the duſt, ſays one of the prophets, ſhall riſe again; ſome of them to endleſs happineſs, and others to an ignominy, that ſhall know no term.

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O my Theophilus! What a ſight ſhall we then behold! What will be your ſentiments, when the thrilling ſound of the trumpet ſhall reecho on all ſides; *Ariſe ye dead and come to judgment:* when you ſhall ſee all mankind appear, without any other diſtinction, than that of their former works and actions! St Jerom, in the deep receſs of a wild and lonely deſert, imagined he heard perpetually the ſhrill accents of this laſt trumpet, and his inmoſt ſoul ſhrunk with horror and dread. How much more reaſon have we ourſelves to fear it! How can we be at our eaſe? If the future reſurrection of the body be an object of hope and conſolation for the juſt, it is no leſs an object of terror and diſmay for ſinners. And of which number are we?

According to the expreſſion of thy ſacred writ, O God! death is no more than a ſleep. My body will one day be crumbled into duſt: but after a temporary repoſe in the grave, it will ariſe again from it, reanimated and quickened. It will ariſe; no longer, as at preſent, clothed with infirmity and weakneſs; but veſted with ſplendor, impaſſiveneſs and immortality. This, I hope, O Lord! from thy mercy; and this hope, which I cheriſh, is my ſupport and conſolation againſt the terrors of death. Nature, indeed, apprehends this paſſage from time to eternity; but the belief of a reſurrection revives and ſuſtains me. Thou didſt create man immortal; and had he but been faithful to thee, he would never have taſted death. It is natural

for

for him to dread a ſtate, that he ought not to have known: but death is the puniſhment of his ſin. Nevertheleſs, thou haſt greatly mitigated this puniſhment, by dying thyſelf to expiate our crimes; and by riſing again, to give us a pledge of our own reſurrection. Thou haſt ſaid of thyſelf; *I am the reſurrection and life: he, that believeth in me, ſhall live, although he may have been dead.* Thou art my *life*, O God! for of thee I hold my exiſtence. Thou art my *reſurrection:* for it is by thee this mortal body ſhall hereafter be clothed with a bliſful immortality. I believe in thee. I ſhall therefore be reſtored once more to life; after ſuffering the ſtroke of death, to which all are condemned. I ſhall be reſtored to life, to die no more; but to reign throughout eternity with thee, my Sovereign good.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould conſole ourſelves under the afflictions of the body with the hopes of it's reſurrection.

LECTURE XXXIII.

ON THE FUTURE STATE OF LIFE EVERLASTING.

The wicked ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment, and the juſt into eternal life. Matt. xxv. 46.

THE Soul, my dear Theophilus, we are aſſured never dies. At the moment of diſſolution it is,

is, indeed, ſeparated from the body; but ſtill it does not die. Immortal in it's nature, it paſſes from this life to another; from this viſible and material world, to a world inviſible and ſpiritual. The heathens themſelves believed in a future ſtate, in which all were to be treated according to their works. The expectation of a life to come, ſays Tertullian, is the faith of mankind, and the doctrine of nature.

There is another life, therefore, after the preſent; and this ſecond life ſhall have no end. We ſhall there be eternally either happy or miſerable, according to our diſpoſitions at the hour of death. The virtuous ſoul, on it's quitting the body, ſhall be received into the company of the bleſſed in heaven, there, with them, to enjoy the preſence of the Deity. *At preſent*, St. Paul ſays, *we ſee God in imagination only: but then we ſhall behold him face to face.—Now we know him imperfectly: but then we ſhall know him in the ſame manner, as we are known to him. We know*, ſays St. John, *that, when God ſhall reveal himſelf to us in his glory, we ſhall be like to him; becauſe we ſhall ſee him as he is.* To behold the Deity, to poſſeſs him is the greateſt happineſs to be wiſhed for; ſince he is the Sovereign good, the fountain and plenitude of every perfection. This happineſs ſurpaſſes not only our utterance, but our warmeſt conceptions. *The eye hath not ſeen, nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them, that truly love him.* They

ſhall be filled with the good things of the houſe of the Lord, and inebriated with the torrent of his unſpeakable delights. For ever they ſhall love God, and for ever be loved by him: a love, that will be the ſource of incomprehenſible joy. After the general reſurrection, their bodies ſhall likewiſe have part in this immenſe felicity. No longer ſhall there be grief, nor cauſe for lamentation; for the firſt ſtate ſhall be paſſed away. They ſhall know neither hunger nor thirſt: nor ſhall the ſcorching ſun or parching winds any more incommode them; and God himſelf ſhall dry up their tears. Death ſhall be no more, nor the obſcurity of night; for the brightneſs of the Lord ſhall eternally illumine them. Such, my dear child, will be the portion of the elect.

On the other hand, the reprobated ſoul, at the inſtant of death, ſhall be plunged into hell, where, for ever ſecluded from God, and barred from all eſcape, it ſhall burn with the devils in unquenchable flames. It ſhall conſtantly be longing, with the moſt painful regret, after it's God, whom it ſhall then have found to be it's Sovereign good, and ſhall be as conſtantly diſappointed. The Lord, who is at preſent ſo merciful and kind, ſhall then be an irritated and inflexible avenger An irrevocable curſe and a bottomleſs abyſs ſhall exclude her eternally from the heavenly Jeruſalem: while the moſt frightful deſpair ſhall harrow up her vitals, and increaſe every inſtant, her torments and miſery.

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The bodies of the reprobate ſhall riſe, it is true. But their reſurrection ſhall ſerve only to augment their calamity, and to conſummate their wretchedneſs. Immerſed in the fiery gulph, they ſhall be immortal to no other purpoſe, than to ſuffer eternally. They ſhall burn without being conſumed; the objects of an Almighty vengeance, which they can neither elude nor appeaſe. Bitter and fruitleſs tears, gnaſhing of teeth and raging horror ſhall be their lot for all eternity. *For their worm ſhall never die*, ſays Chriſt, *nor their fire be extinguiſhed.* What a picture, Theophilus! Can you behold it without ſhuddering? And yet nothing is more true. It is Jeſus Chriſt, that has drawn it. It would be arraining truth itſelf, to ſuſpect exaggeration in the words, in which he has painted it; which are moreover ſo clear, and marked in ſuch ſtrong colours, as not to be obſcured. It is he, who pronounces that formidable ſentence; *Go from me, ye curſed; go into ever laſting fire, that has been prepared for the devil and his angels.* It is he, who informs us of the unavailing lamentations and the gnaſhing of teeth. It is he, who diſcovers to us the inſurmountable abyſs, that divides Dives from Lazarus; and who makes Abraham refuſe to the former a ſingle drop of water to cool his parched tongue. It is he, who acquaints us that the fire of hell ſhall not be extinguiſhed, nor the worm of conſcience ever die. While we hear him ſay all this, what can we do but tremble? Ought not ſuch terrible menaces, from the mouth

of truth itſelf, to awaken thoſe from their lethargy, who have ſtill their reflexion, and a ſpark of faith left?

I underſtand, my God! why, in the Scripture, thou ſo often remindeſt me of the goods and evils of futurity; of that ſtate, where virtue ſhall be rewarded without bounds or control, and vice ſhall be puniſhed without mercy or compaſſion. It is becauſe the goods of this world are nothing, comparatively with what thou haſt prepared for thy ſervants. It is becauſe the evils, we are here expoſed to, bear no proportion to the ſufferings, with which thou threateneſt the wicked. Thou wiſheſt us to deſpiſe this life, which paſſes like a dream; and to aſpire to the life to come, which ſhall never have an end. The time, we ſpend here, is a time of trial and probation. If we be faithful to thy commands, we are aſſured of a happy futurity. If, on the contrary, we be diſobedient to them, we are threatened with eternal woes. Pierce, O God! my heart with a dread of hell-fire, that this ſalutary fear may reſtrain me from ſin. Inſpire me with a love of heaven, that may ſupport and uphold me in the practice of virtue. Let me never forget that this preſent life is granted me only to merit another, in which I am deſtined to live for a boundleſs eternity.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould often reflect that we have a hell to avoid, and a heaven to gain.

END of the FIRST PART.

PART II.

THE

OBLIGATIONS OF RELIGION.

LECTURE XXXIV.

ON FAITH.

Ye, that fear the Lord, believe him. Eccleſ. ii. 8.

THE firſt obligation, God impoſes on man, is faith: and this obligation is implied in thoſe words of the great commandment: *Thou ſhalt adore the Lord, thy God: and him alone ſhalt thou ſerve.* — Faith conſiſts in believing, without heſitation, all the truths, that God has revealed, and which the Church, on his part, propoſes to our aſſent. Theſe truths are contained in the Scriptures and in tradition. By the *Scriptures* we mean the ſacred volumes, dictated by the Holy Ghoſt, and penned by his direction; and of theſe there are two ſorts, the old and the new teſtament. By *tradition* we underſtand the ordinances of God, not *written* by inſpired

authors, but *taught by word of mouth*, and tranſmitted down to our days by the living voice of the faithful.

The grand depoſite of the Scriptures and tradition is intruſted to the Church. It is ſhe, that decides, and marks out the true ſenſe; which ſhe propoſes to the faithful by an infallible judgment and a ſovereign authority. God has given her this power: he has promiſed to preſerve her from error, and to guide her in the path of truth, to the end of the world. It is our duty, therefore, to believe whatever ſhe teaches; nor is there a ray of hope for him, who is deſtitute of faith. On this head, the word of Chriſt is poſitive. *He, who believeth, and is baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved. But he, who believeth not, ſhall be condemned. Without faith*, ſays the Apoſtle, *it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.* The council of Trent ſtyles faith the firſt ſtep to ſalvation, the groundwork and root of juſtification and merit. You here ſee the indiſpenſable neceſſity of faith. Faith does honor to God, and pays him the tribute due to him, as the Sovereign truth. It is, in the language of St. Paul, a ſacrifice, that we make to him; by ſubjecting our underſtanding to his infallible word, and impoſing ſilence on our doubts and prejudices, to believe without demur, on the authority of his veracity, what our ſenſes do not perceive, nor our comprehenſion attain to.

But is it poſſible to believe what one neither ſees, nor comprehends? Yes, my dear Theophilus, you

you daily believe things, that you never have ſeen. Let a perſon, of whom you have a favorable opinion, tell you of a matter of fact, of which he has been witneſs himſelf, you will not heſitate to credit him. And does not the teſtimony of God deſerve your credit far more, than the aſſurance of man? But the principles of faith, you ſay, are above comprehenſion. That they are ſo I admit. But how many things are there, even in the order of nature, that we do not comprehend? Can you conceive how a ſeed, that is buried in the earth, ſhould produce a plant or a flower? Certainly, you cannot: and yet you believe it. With how much more reaſon ought you readily to believe what the Deity has revealed? For being the Sovereign truth, we are ſure that he can neither be deceived himſelf, nor impoſe upon us. Wherefore, to believe what even we do not comprehend, on the authority of God's word, is conſonant to reaſon. For we believe, not becauſe we comprehend, but becauſe Infallibility has ſpoken: and faith is then built on the veracity of God, and not on any light or underſtanding of our own.

Revelation alone could give us an idea of the myſteries of religion, and with this God has favored us. He has done ſtill more. For he has eſtabliſhed a ſupreme, an unerring authority, to propoſe them to us. As he calls all mankind to the knowledge of the truth, he has furniſhed a method of diſcovering it, within the reach of every one. Docility

alone is required to be a Chriſtian; a docility, which is, by no means, a blind credulity; but a ſubmiſſion, grounded on the ſtrongeſt motives, and on principles ſufficient to determine, at a look, any reaſonable perſon. But how do we know that God has ſpoken? We know it by all the proofs, that ſuſtain Chriſtianity. We know it by public and authentic documents, and principally by miracles. "Jeſus Chriſt" ſays St. Auſtin, "required faith from "mankind. But before he required it, he deſerved "it by his miracles." This proof he held up to the Jews. *The works, that I do,* he ſays, *in the name of my Father, bear teſtimony of me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe not in me. But if I do them, though you believe not in me, believe at leaſt in my works.* Miracles, then, are the voice of God; and a doctrine, founded on them, is not to be rejected without the imputation of impiety.

On theſe grounds, therefore, believe all the articles of your faith; for to reject any one of them is inconſiſtent with this duty. Believe them firmly, that is, without doubt or heſitation; for theſe cannot be admitted, without offending againſt faith. And, for this reaſon, be extremely cautious of reading any ſuch writings, as militate againſt religion in general, or againſt thoſe principles of orthodoxy, in which you have been ſo carefully tutored. There is danger in the attempt; and *Whoever loves the danger, ſhall periſh in it.* We ſhould alſo offend againſt faith, if the fear of the world ſhould ever induce

induce us to renounce it exteriorly; though, at the ſame time, we might flatter ourſelves that we retained it at heart. The martyrs preferred ſuffering every ſpecies of torments, even death itſelf, to diſſembling their faith in the face of their perſecutors. Finally, it is offending againſt faith to neglect to procure inſtructions upon any of thoſe articles, of which the knowledge and acquaintance are requiſite to ſalvation. Through this culpable neglect, many live in the ignorance of what it is incumbent on them to know, and commit numberleſs faults, of which they are wholly unconſcious.

O my God! I believe all the myſteries, which it has pleaſed thee to reveal. I hope ever to continue docile, to the voice of the Church, which thou thyſelf doſt conduct, and enlighten by thy Holy Spirit. However impenetrable the truths, to which thou exacteſt my aſſent, I believe them firmly; for though I do not comprehend, yet I know thou haſt revealed them, and that is ſufficient. Far from me the preſumption, that dares to ſubject thy word to the ſcrutiny of reaſon. Far from me the curioſity of reading ſuch productions. Thou haſt ſpoken, O Lord! The only part for me to take is to ſilence my erring judgment: and to ſubmit both that and the evidence of my ſenſes to thy ſacred veracity. I believe at preſent without comprehending; but the time will come, at leaſt I hope it of thy mercy, when I ſhall be admitted into thy ſanctuary, where truth ſhall ſhine conſpicuous,

and

and where the obſcurity of faith ſhall give place to unclouded brilliancy. It is thy will that during this life, we ſhould be content to be guided by the light of revelation: and this thou haſt ordained that we might have the merit of faith. Strengthen this faith in me; and guard it againſt the ſnares, that beſet it on every ſide. Make me ſolicitous to avoid whatever may tend to weaken it; and never ſuffer me to loſe ſo important a treaſure.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould frequently make acts of Faith.

LECTURE XXXV.

ON HOPE.

Ye, that fear the Lord, hope in him. Eccleſ. ii. 9.

THE ſecond obligation, man owes to the Deity, is hope; that is, to expect, with a firm confidence of his infinite mercy, the bleſſings, he has promiſed. Theſe bleſſings are eternal ſalvation, and the graces, we ſtand in need of, to conduct us to it. How valuable are theſe bleſſings! What a happineſs do they enſure us! Nothing leſs than the ſight and poſſeſſion of God himſelf. A happineſs infinitely ſuperior to our feeble exertions, and owing entirely to his ineffable mercy.

Of

Of ourſelves, we are incapable of meriting ſuch a bliſs. But God, who loves us notwithſtanding our unworthineſs, promiſes to grant the aſſiſtance of his grace, to bring us to it. He has given his only Son, that *Whoever believeth in him, may not periſh; but may have eternal life.* The view of our miſery ought not to prevent us from truſting in God, and from expecting the good things, that he has graciouſly promiſed. His omnipotence, to which nothing is impoſſible; his mercy, which is uncircumſcribed; the preſent, he has made us of his Son; his grace; his promiſes, and his command to confide in him through the merits of Chriſt, theſe are the ſtrong foundations of the Chriſtian's hope. With ſuch motives of confidence, not to place our truſt in him would be offering him an inſult. The Almighty, who would have us believe in him, when he ſpeaks, would alſo have us hope in him, when he promiſes.

Hope is no leſs neceſſary to ſalvation, than faith itſelf. *Truſt in God,* ſays the prophet, *and do good.* The Apoſtle enjoins us not only to be ſtrong in faith, but alſo conſtant in the hope, which is afforded us by the Goſpel; for *by hope,* he adds, *we are ſaved.* He would have a Chriſtian, in the very midſt of adverſity, hold up his head undauntedly, in the aſſurance of belonging to the family of God; fully perſuaded his hope will not be fruſtrated. But obſerve, Theophilus; our hope muſt be firm and unalterably conſtant. The hope of a Chriſtian muſt not be unſettled. It muſt be ſtable and fixed; becauſe

cauſe reſting on a ſolid, an immoveable baſis. St. Paul compares it to the anchor of a ſhip, which keeps the veſſel ſteady amidſt the toſſing of the foaming billows. Nor will this hope be ever confounded, while it continues humble and reſolute.—The Almighty cannot be faithleſs. *Heaven and earth ſhall paſs; but his word ſhall not*, he ſays. No one ever hoped in him, that did not experience his protection. It is true that, in this life, hope is always blended with fear: and this God permits, in order to keep us in a ſtate of humility and diffidence. But this fear and incertitude are not the reſult of any ſuppoſed deficiency on the part of the Deity: for he is rich in mercy, and faithful to his word. They proceed wholly from ourſelves. We are aſſured, indeed, that, if we place our confidence in God, he will give us what he has promiſed: but we have reaſon to apprehend leſt we ourſelves obſtruct the communication of his grace.

Two oppoſite vices militate againſt this virtue of hope; on the one ſide deſpair, and on the other preſumption. We ſhould ſin againſt hope, if, deſpairing of ſalvation, we ſhould continue in a ſtate of impenitence, without endeavouring to extricate ourſelves. Such was the crime of Cain, who, having murthered his brother, ſaid; *My iniquity is too great to be pardoned.* Deſpair is a ſin of the blackeſt die in the eyes of God; becauſe it inſults his mercy, the attribute, which, of all others, he moſt delights to ſhew us; and to which he moſt deſires we ſhould render

render our homage, by an unlimited confidence.—In fact, however enormous our crimes, ſtill the divine juſtice exceeds them, in an infinite degree; nor is there a ſin, that our Redeemer has not expiated by his death, and of which he has not merited the fulleſt forgiveneſs. If then, unfortunately, you fall into ſin, deſpair not of God's mercy. He is an affectionate father, who only deſires the return of his child. Your repentance will awaken all his compaſſion and tenderneſs. But dread abuſing his patience, by a criminal deſign to offend him more freely, or to perſevere with audacity in your diſorderly ways.

We ſhould likewiſe ſin againſt hope, if, preſuming on the divine mercy, or on the ſtrength of our own ſufficiency, we ſhould delay our converſion. Such is the crime of thoſe, who, from a wrong notion of God's goodneſs, imagine they ſhall be ſaved, without forſaking their ſins: or who, on the confidence of a long life, perſuade themſelves it will be enough to think of ſalvation, when their years begin to decline. How many young people have been deceived by this deluſion! They reckoned upon a time to come, when, alas! it was decreed there ſhould be no ſuch time for them. Avoid this ſnare; and poſtpone not your determination of conſecrating yourſelf to God. The term of your life is uncertain. No age is ſecure from the iron hand of death.

Happy,

Happy, O God! the man, that relies on thee. He will ſurely find the accompliſhment of thy infallible promiſes. I hope, dear Lord! myſelf that thou wilt ſave me by thy grace, I truſt not to my own endeavours: for theſe I know would be but a feeble ground of hope. It is on thy mercy, that I depend, and the merits of my Saviour. Through theſe I hope for every thing; both eternal ſalvation, and the means to attain it. Thou art infinitely good. Thou haſt given us thy beloved Son. After this, what canſt thou refuſe us? If ever I ſhould be tempted to deſpair, a look at the croſs would remove my diſtruſt: and provided I abuſe not thy mercy, by continuing in ſin, this hope will bring me ſafe to the term of ſalvation. I will not be diſheartened by the perils, I am expoſed to; for thou canſt eaſily reſcue me. No my God! never wilt thou forſake him, who puts his truſt in thee. Becauſe he does ſo, thou wilt be his ſupport. Thou art faithful to thy promiſes, and thy word ſhall be accompliſhed.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould frequently make acts of hope.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXVI.

ON CHARITY.

Ye, that fear the Lord, love him. Eccleſ. ii. 10.

THOU ſhalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole ſoul, with all thy mind and with all thy ſtrength. Such is the command delivered by Moſes, in the name of the Divinity, and renewed by Jeſus Chriſt, in the pages of his Goſpel. We are there informed that a doctor of the Jewiſh law, having propoſed to him this queſtion; *Which is the greateſt commandment?* received this anſwer; *Thou ſhalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart &c. This is the firſt, and the greateſt commandment.*

Was it then neceſſary, Theophilus, that God ſhould command us to love him? Is he not in himſelf ſovereignly amiable? His own infinite perfections, his goodneſs in our regard, the favors he heaps upon us, the advantages of adhering to him, do not all theſe conſiderations demand our affection? He created us; he preſerves us; he feeds us. The heavens, the earth, the immenſe variety of creatures, which he has made for our ſervice, do they not unanimouſly challenge our moſt grateful attachment? But, in the order of grace, God has done ſtill infinitely more for us. He has given his beloved Son, as a ſacrifice for our redemption.—Every inſtant of our lives he ſupports us by his grace.

grace. He has prepared for us, in heaven, an immeaſurable happineſs. And is not here ſufficient to win our heart? For this is the ſole return he demands for ſuch numberleſs favors. *Son*, he ſays, *give me thy heart*. Can you then refuſe him what he aſks for? Can you be inſenſible to all his tenderneſs? Is not your heart, which he requires, his own, by the claims of juſtice? Did he not give it to you? And wherefore, but that you might love him? Can it be neceſſary to prove to a child that he is bound to love his father? Rather, is not this ſentiment natural to man? Have you not often felt the pleaſure, which the preſence of a father, or even the recollection of him, brings? And is not God your father? Is there any one, to whom this name may be more juſtly applied? Was there ever a more affectionate parent? To all theſe motives add the delight, that is found in this ſacred love. What a pure and unmixed joy, what a ſweet ſatisfaction is the portion of that breaſt, which is inflamed with the love of God! The pleaſures of the world can afford nothing equivalent to thoſe exquiſite feelings, that attend divine love.

Attach yourſelf then to God. Give him your heart, before ſin has made it unworthy of his acceptance. It is the love of him only that can render you happy; and the more ardent this is, the more happy will you be. Yes: God alone is our Sovereign good. The man, who is ſeparated from him, is miſerable in the midſt of riches, of honors and of pleaſures:

pleaſures : ſomething is always wanting to him, and never is he content. But he, who loves his God, finds ſuch conſolations therein, as compenſate all deficiencies. His deſires are ſatisfied; his heart is at eaſe; nor can any thing ruffle the peace of his mind. Even in indigence he is rich; in humiliations great; in ſufferings happy. If you doubt it, hear the Apoſtle: *I am filled*, he ſays, *with joy, in the midſt of my tribulations*. Behold the eagerneſs, with which the martyrs ran to meet the moſt cruel torments. Try it yourſelf; and learn by experience how ſweet the Lord is to them, that love him ſincerely.

But how are we to love God? Will a languid, will a divided, will a ſteril love ſuffice to fulfil this obligation? No. You muſt love the Lord, your God, *with your whole heart, with your whole ſoul, with your whole ſtrength*. God will have your affections entirely to himſelf. You muſt, therefore, prefer him to all creatures. You muſt be willing rather to loſe every thing than his grace. In fine, you muſt love nothing, but with regard and relation to him. It is then tranſgreſſing this commandment to make any object but God your Sovereign good, as the ambitious man does honor, the covetous wealth, the voluptuous pleaſure. Moreover, the love of God muſt be active. *If any one loveth me*, ſays Chriſt, *he will keep my commandments*. It is not enough then to ſay you love God. Words are not ſufficient: there muſt alſo be works. The love of

God cannot be idle. It is like a fire, ever in motion. Where it produces no effects, there is reaſon to judge it extinct.

Infuſe into my heart, O God! this celeſtial charity. Kindle in it that holy fire, which thou broughtedſt with thee from heaven. Thou madeſt it not to love creatures, but to attach itſelf to thyſelf. What out of thee can I find, that deſerves my affections? Yes, I perceive that my heart will for ever be uneaſy, till it reſts in thee. I covet neither riches, nor aught elſe the world can give me.—Thee only I deſire, my God! Thou alone canſt determine whether I love thee or not, and in what degree. All I know is, that I wiſh to love thee; to love thee fervently; to love thee ſolely, and to love thee for ever. If my love is ſtill cold, animate it; and render it more forcible than the ſeductive charms of pleaſure, more potent than the fear of pain, or the horrors of death. May it influence me here to an exact obſervance of thy commands; and hereafter receive it's reward in loving thee eternally.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould frequently make acts of Charity.

LECTURE

LECTURE XXXVII.

ON THE ADORATION DUE TO GOD.

Thou ſhalt adore the Lord thy God; and him only ſhalt thou ſerve. Exod. vi. 13.

THE next obligation, compriſed in the firſt commandment, is that of adoring the Deity; that is to ſay, of paying him the homage, to which he is entitled, as the Sovereign Lord of all things.—Adoration is a profound humiliation of the ſoul, before the Supreme Majeſty; before him, who created the heavens and the earth; who alone is great, who alone is powerful, who alone is formidable: before the moſt High, who inhabits light inacceſſible, and who ſolely, in himſelf, poſſeſſes immortality. In his preſence, ſays the Prophet, all the nations of the globe are no more than a drop of water; and the earth itſelf but as a grain of ſand. At the ſight of his infinite perfections, the abaſhed ſoul annihilates herſelf: ſhe makes an humble avowal of her dependance: ſhe glorifies his holy name: ſhe returns him thanks for all his favors, and begs reſpectfully what more ſhe wants, and what ſhe expects from him alone: ſhe offers herſelf, without reſerve, to the accompliſhment of his will, and becomes wholly reſigned to the diſpenſations of his providence.

Theſe internal ſentiments diſcover themſelves outwardly by correſponding actions; by genu-

flexion, by prayer, and moſt eſpecially by the ſacrifice of the maſs, of all the various acts of worſhip the moſt auguſt and moſt excellent. It is your duty then, Theophilus, to pray to God daily, and that chiefly in the morning and evening, the tribute of praiſe and adoration. By this religious exerciſe, you ſhould begin and end the day. Fail not, therefore, to diſcharge an obligation ſo eſſential. Give your firſt thoughts to him, who created you, who preſerves you, and who loads you daily with freſh bleſſings and favors. *The wiſe man*, ſays the Scripture, *will watch from the break of day, to give his heart to the Lord; and will offer his ſupplications to the moſt High in heaven.*

Let then your firſt action be to proſtrate yourſelf at the feet of his Sovereign Majeſty, to conſecrate yourſelf to his ſervice, and to beg of him the grace, you ſtand in need of for your conduct. Make it your rule to aſſiſt, as often as poſſible, at the ſacrifice of the altar; the beſt means of ſanctifying the remainder of the day. Before and after meals, pay your reſpects to this generous Father, who opens his hand, and fills his children with benedictions. Never let ſhame deter you from this laudable practice. Does a child bluſh to teſtify his acknowledgments to a father, whenever he receives from him new proofs of his kindneſs? At the cloſe of day, renew that homage to God, with which you began it. Humble yourſelf then in his preſence, at the view of your failings during the courſe of

the

the preceding day. Crave his forgiveneſs, and thank him for all favors. But remember that the form of prayer, and whatever other external acts are but the carcaſs of religion. The ſoul of it are the internal ſentiments of the mind, and the adoration of the heart. If theſe be wanting, words and exterior geſtures can never pleaſe the Deity. They will only draw upon us the reproach, which he formerly made to the Jews: *This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* God is a ſpirit; and requires to be adored in ſpirit and in truth.

Adoration is a kind of homage, that belongs only to the Supreme being. We honor, if you will the Saints: but we adore them not. We reverence and reſpect them, as the ſervants and friends of God: but we do not render them that worſhip, which is due to him alone. It is proper and advantageous to invoke their interceſſion; that, through their aſſiſtance, we may obtain of the Almighty the relief of our wants. But it is of God ſolely that we petition it; in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, the common Saviour of all; who alone has merited for us, by his ſufferings and death, whatever grace we can receive. We alſo honor their reliefs, as the precious remnants of bodies, that have been the temples of the Holy-Ghoſt, to be reſuſcitated in glory: and in ſo doing, we do but copy the example of preceding ages. The catholic Church has ever regarded with an eye of religious veneration the bodies of the

Saints. Of this we have a remarkable inſtance in a letter, wherein the faithful of Smyrna relate the martyrdom of St Polycarp, their well beloved biſhop. "We ſaved," they ſay, "his bones, more pre-"cious to us than jewels, and we depoſited them "in a proper place; where we hope, in God, to "meet to celebrate his martyrdom." Again, we honor their pictures, but this honor is referred to the object, they repreſent. We know no virtue they poſſeſs, but that of reminding us of thoſe, whoſe reſemblance they are ſuppoſed to bear. In kneeling before the image of Chriſt, or the picture of a Saint, it is Chriſt himſelf that we adore; it is the Saints in heaven whom we honor.

Every inſtant of my life, O God! ought to be employed in adoring thee; becauſe there is not one, but what is marked with ſome proof of thy benevolence. Yet thou art pleaſed to be ſatisfied with a few acts of religious worſhip, expreſſive of my daily gratitude. How cenſurable ſhould I be, could I fail to render thee this ſmall tribute! No my God! I will never neglect a duty ſo eſſential and ſo eaſy. The firſt moments of the day ſhall be conſecrated to thee. In the morning, proſtrate at the feet of thy infinite majeſty, I will adore, I will praiſe thee, and offer thee all my actions. I will endeavour to ſanctify my works and meals, by beginning and concluding them with raiſing up my mind to thee. At night, before I preſume to take my reſt, I will recall the ſins of the day, to efface them by repentance;

and

and the favors, conferred upon me, to bleſs thy mercy for them. Permit me not careleſsly to acquit myſelf of theſe duties. Animate me with the ſpirit of fervor, that I may diſcharge them in ſuch a manner, as may be worthy of thee, and acceptable in thy ſight.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould be punctual in performing our morning and evening devotions.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

ON THE BEHAVIOUR TO BE OBSERVED IN PLACES OF WORSHIP.

The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep ſilence in his preſence. Habac. ii 20.

OF the different ways of tranſgreſſing againſt the adoration due to God, the moſt to be avoided, Theophilus, is a want of reſpect in places dedicated to his ſervice.

The precept, that enjoins us to revere thoſe ſacred edifices, is frequently repeated in the pages of the Scripture. *Take heed to your ſteps, when you enter the houſe of God. Adore the Lord in his holy temple. Tremble with awe, in approaching my ſanctuary.* By theſe multiplied admonitions, you ſee how jealous

God is of the honor of his houſe, and how offenſive the profanations committed therein. Inſomuch that this was the only crime, that rouſed the indignation of our Saviour, while reſident among us. He was compaſſionate to ſinners. He received them with kindneſs, and even ſat down to table with them. But in regard to thoſe, that violated the ſanctity of the temple, he ſeemed to forget that mild forbearance, which ſo ſtrongly characteriſed him.—His zeal caught fire, and he was tranſported with a pious anger. Twice he drove them out of the temple, ſaying; *It is written*; *My houſe ſhall be called a houſe of prayer*; *but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

In fact, of all inſults againſt the Deity, there is none more deſerving of his reſentment, than the abuſe of thoſe places, that are devoted to his worſhip. For what in reality are they? They are the temples of God, which he fills with his glory: they are the habitations of the Almighty, which he honors with his preſence: they are the manſions of the Divinity, appropriated to his ſervice. Doubtleſs, the univerſe is his temple, the whole earth his abode: but a Church is a place, that he has particularly ſingled out for his worſhip and adoration. It is there the faithful aſſemble to pray to him, to praiſe him, and to celebrate the ſacred myſteries. It is there Jeſus Chriſt reſides in perſon, and offers himſelf to his Father for us. What more do we want to impreſs us with reſpect and the moſt religious attention? Ought we not to be ſeized, on entering

ing ſuch places, with awful apprehenſion, and to exclaim with the Patriarch: *How tremendous this place! It is truly the houſe of God, the gate of heaven!* For who is it that dwells within the walls of theſe hallowed ſanctuaries? Is it not the ſame Deity, as the bleſſed adore in heaven? Is it not the lamb of God, in whoſe preſence the proſtrate Angels cover their faces with their wings? Like them, therefore, we ſhould annihilate ourſelves before the throne of his Supreme majeſty. He is here veiled, I grant: but is he the leſs worthy of our veneration? How then can we dare to enter his reſidence without the reſpect, that is due to him? How remain there inattentive and ſtupidly careleſs, and ſometimes even with an air of levity, more becoming a play-houſe? O God! can Chriſtians, can thy children conduct themſelves in a manner ſo cenſurable?

Once more, what is a Church? It is a houſe of thankſgiving and benediction. It is there God takes pleaſure in diſplaying his bounty, and exhibiting his mercy. Every thing therein proclaims his kindneſs to us. The ſacred font, where, together with the life of grace, we received the invaluable right to a celeſtial inheritance: the croſs, on which our Redeemer was immolated for us: the altar, on which he daily offers himſelf, to apply to our ſouls the fruit of his ſufferings: ought not objects ſo intereſting to awaken our attention, and ſtimulate our feelings? Ought they not to fill our minds with pious thoughts, and our hearts with devout affections?

ons? Like David, a Chriſtian ſhould burn with the deſire of preſenting himſelf before the Lord, of returning him thanks for his paſt bleſſings, and of ſoliciting his future aid. He ſhould cry out with the Pſalmiſt: *How lovely, O Lord, are thy tabernacles! A ſingle day, ſpent in thy houſe, is preferable to years in the tents of the wicked.* How then does it happen that we go there with reluctance; that we feel ſo uneaſy, while we are there; and that, during the time, we are generally occupied with frivolous at leaſt, if not criminal thoughts? Shall ſo many proofs of the divine goodneſs ſpeak in vain to our hearts? How inſulting thus to anſwer his love with indifference only and diſguſt!

I am ſorry, my God! for the faults, I have committed in thy houſe through levity and giddineſs. Pardon them, I entreat thee. I will make amends for them in future by recollection and modeſty. I will keep a guard upon my ſenſes, to avoid whatever may draw me off from that reſpectful attention, which thy preſence demands. I will watch over my thoughts, to keep at a diſtance all ſuch, as may lead me from thee. I will never more enter thy temple, without recalling to mind that thou doſt fill it with thy glory. My ſole employment there ſhall be to adore thee, to bleſs thee for thy mercies, to expoſe my wants to thee, and to intereſt thy beneficence in favour of my neceſſities.—Such objects as theſe ſhall alone engage my attention, and take up the moments, that I ſpend in thy ſight.

ſight. Give me, dear Lord, the ſentiments of an affectionate piety. Inſtill into me a holy fear, a reſpect mixed with confidence; and grant that, by a continual watchfulneſs, I may keep my mind ſteadily and invariably fixed on thee.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould always recollect ourſelves, when we enter the houſe of God.

LECTURE XXXIX.

ON SWEARING.

Thou ſhalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain. Exod. xx. 7.

BY this prohibition, God forbids us to ſwear, whether falſely or unneceſſarily.

To ſwear is to invoke the Deity to witneſs what we affirm, or what we promiſe. Sometimes, imprecation is added thereto; as when we wiſh any harm to ourſelves, or to others, if what we aſſert be not true. It is a real oath, when, to certify a matter, we appeal to the teſtimony of any creature, as to the heavens, the earth, &c. becauſe all creatures belong to God; and therefore to ſwear by them is, in fact, to ſwear by him, whoſe works they are. *Swear not*, Chriſt ſays, *either by heaven,*

heaven, becauſe it is the throne of God; or by the earth, becauſe it is his footſtool.

Not that to ſwear is at all times unlawful.—There are occaſions, on which it is incumbent to confirm by oath the truth of what is ſaid: as for inſtance, ſhould we be cited before a magiſtrate, the miniſter of the civil power. In this caſe, we addreſs ourſelves to God, the Sovereign truth, and declare in his ſacred name the certainty of what we affirm. The invocation of the Deity imprints an authority on the words of man, which ſettles every doubt. In circumſtances of this nature, an oath is not only allowable; but even an act of religion, and an homage, we pay to the ſupreme and eternal truth. Men ſwear, ſays the Apoſtle, by one that is ſuperior to themſelves; and an oath is the firmeſt aſſurance, they can give, to terminate their differences, and remove all ſuſpicions.

But obſerve, my Theophilus, that for an oath to be lawful, three conditions are requiſite, as expreſſed by the Scripture in the following terms.—*You ſhall ſwear with truth, with judgment and with juſtice.* *Truth* then is the firſt thing requiſite; that is to ſay, the object ſworn to muſt not only be true; but we ſhould likewiſe be ſure of it, and, if the matter in queſtion is a promiſe, be ſincerely determined to fulfil the obligation. To ſwear to a falſhood, or to promiſe upon oath, what one has no intention of performing is perjury: it is a ſacrilegious proſtitution of the holy name of God: it is calling

calling on the Sovereign truth to bear witneſs to a lie, and rendering it the accomplice of fraud and deceit. How dreadful a crime! What injury more atrocious can be offered to the Deity?

The ſecond condition required to make an oath allowable is *judgment*; that is, it muſt not be recurred to but on ſubjects of importance, nor without a viſible neceſſity. To ſwear, therefore, on light and trivial occaſions; to ſwear through paſſion; to ſwear on every occurrence, and to give a reliſh, as it were, to converſation, is to diſhonor God's name. Is then this adorable name to be made the ſport of levity, the language of indiſcretion, the vehicle of revenge, the impious ſeaſoning of diſcourſe? What an abuſe of a name ſo ſacred, that it ought not to be pronounced but with the moſt profound reſpect; of a name ſo tremendous, that it ſhould not be uſed but with awful apprehenſion? Avail yourſelf of the advice, which the Holy-Ghoſt gives you: *Let not your mouth be accuſtomed to ſwear; for, he that ſwears much, ſhall be filled with iniquity.*

Finally, the laſt condition is *juſtice*; that is, we are never allowed to ſwear to do any thing unlawful. To engage oneſelf by oath to commit an unjuſt action is attempting to make the Deity, who is holineſs itſelf, ſubſervient to man's iniquity: it is making him witneſs to a determination, that his ſanctity condemns: it is profaning his ſacred name in a manner the moſt outrageous. If, unfortunately, one ſhould have taken ſuch an unwarrantable oath,

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it muſt not be kept: that would be an additional offence. But in thoſe circumſtances, we ſhould retract the promiſe, and beg pardon of God; not for having failed to execute the oath, but for having ſworn, by his name, to do what was wrong.—Thus Herod, who had promiſed the daughter of Herodias to grant whatever ſhe ſhould aſk, ſo far from being obligated by his oath to accede to her demand of the head of St. John, the Baptiſt, committed a grievous crime in diſcharging his raſh promiſe. An oath becomes invalid of courſe, when it cannot be performed without offending the Almighty.

Pardon me, I entreat O God! for having ſo often mentioned thy name without reverence or reflection. Hitherto, I have been unconſcious of the wrong I did, in violating this precept. But now, that I am better informed, I deteſt my fault, and will endeavour to amend it. I will apply myſelf in earneſt to eradicate this evil habit. I will place a guard upon my tongue, to prevent it, in future, from pronouncing thy name in vain. If, through inattention, I ſhould utter it without the reſpect, which is it's due, I will immediately be ſorry, and renew my reſolution of doing ſo no more. Impreſs me with horror for whatever debaſes thy adorable name. Put a ſeal of circumſpection on my lips, to ſecure them from profaning it. How I wiſh I could compenſate by my profoundeſt veneration the daily inſults, that are offered to a name ſo reſpectable.

Grant,

Grant, O my Sovereign good! that honoring thee in all things, I may be ſo attentive to my words, as to let none in future eſcape me, but what may tend to promote thy glory.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt be careful to avoid contracting a habit of ſwearing.

LECTURE XL.

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SUNDAY.

Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Exod. xx. 8.

ALL the days of our life belong equally to God; nor is there any one among them, that we are not bound to refer to him. But as the avocations, we are ſubject to, prevent a conſtant attention to the duties of religion, God has reſerved to himſelf one day of each week, which he enjoins us to employ in his ſervice and worſhip.

This precept is as ancient as the world itſelf. Immediately after the creation, God conſecrated this day; that man might celebrate the memory of his myſterious repoſe, after the completion of this grand work. Such is the reaſon aſſigned for this command by the oracles of the Scripture. *The Lord reſted on the ſeventh day:* that is to ſay, he ceaſed

ceaſed to produce any thing more. *Wherefore, he bleſſed the Sabbath-day and ſanctified it.* This day of God's reſt was, under the Moſaic law, the ſeventh day. It was then ſtyled the *Sabbath*, which ſignifies repoſe; and was devoted to the Moſt High, by whom every thing was made. But in the law of Chriſt, it is the firſt day of the week, denominated *Sunday*, or otherwiſe *the Lord's day*. This alteration took place in the time of the Apoſtles, and by divine authority; in remembrance of the reſurrection of our Redeemer, Jeſus Chriſt: becauſe it is the day, on which, after the labors of his mortal life, he entered on his eternal and unchangeable repoſe. This day is made ſacred to the honor of God, as the conqueror of death and the Saviour of mankind.

To ſanctify the Lord's day, it is neceſſary, in the firſt place, to abſtain from ſervile works; that is, from every work, that is done for hire, that takes us off from the ſervice of God, or that is, in any ſhape, incompatible with the attention he claims. *Six days ſhalt thou labor*, he ſays, *but the ſeventh day is the reſt of the Lord, thy God. On this day thou ſhalt not labor, neither thyſelf, nor thy ſon, nor thy ſervant, nor the ſtranger, that is within thy walls.*

Under the Jewiſh law, this precept was obſerved to the rigor of the letter. The moſt neceſſary buſineſs, even that of dreſſing victuals, was prohibited on the Sabbath. We read that a man was put to death, for only gathering a few ſticks upon it.

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The law of the Goſpel is leſs ſevere. It allows ſuch works, as neceſſity or charity may occaſionally require: but no other does it permit. It is therefore a ſin to employ oneſelf, on this day, about any mercenary labor, without an abſolute neceſſity. It would be ſtill a greater to give looſe to diſſipation and criminal diverſions, which, inſtead of ſanctifying, would profane this ſolemn day. For can it be ſuppoſed that things, at all times forbidden, are not yet more ſtrictly prohibited on the day appropriated to the Deity? And of all ſervile works, can there be any more inconſiſtent with the ſanctification of the Sunday, than the works of iniquity, which enſlave us to the devil? Doubtleſs, Theophilus, the enormity of ſin is aggravated by being committed on the Lord's day: ſince ſuch a conduct muſt betray a greater forgetfulneſs of God, and a more marked contempt of his law and commands.

Neither is it enough to refrain from what is ſervile and criminal. We are, in the ſecond place, bound to employ the Sunday in the ſervice of God, by a ſerious application to the duties of religion.—This is the ſpirit and deſign of the injunction here inculcated. If the Almighty orders us to deſiſt from our uſual occupations, it is that we may have no impediment in proſecuting his ſervice. Can we think he would be honored by a reſt of indolence and inactivity? Would his day be ſanctified by being ſpent at table, at play, or in viſits? Moſt certainly it would not. The true way to keep the

day holy, is to attend the divine office and public inſtructions; to employ it in praying and reading good books; and, in general, in the practice of all thoſe works, that have for their object the worſhip of God, the ſanctification of ourſelves and the relief of our neighbours.

It is true that innocent and moderate recreation is not forbidden by this ordinance. This is neceſſary for our well-being, and may be lawfully taken. But it never can be allowed to the prejudice of piety; and the time, given to it, muſt not be ſaved from that, which is allotted to devotion. Do not then imagine that, having heared maſs, you are obliged to nothing further. To ſanctify a day, it cannot be ſufficient to ſpend a ſmall portion of it in the diſcharge of religious duties. The Church, indeed, enjoins us to aſſiſt at maſs, as the chief of thoſe good works, by which the day is to be kept holy. But this ſhe enjoins as the principal, and by no means the only work; as a part, and not the whole. The other acts of worſhip, that ſhe recommends during the day, are ſufficient interpreters of her will in this regard.

Thou commandeſt us, O Lord! to honor the day, on which thou didſt enter on thy repoſe.—Thou wouldſt have us, on this day, lay aſide our wonted labors, to occupy ourſelves entirely with the exerciſes of piety, diveſted of every care, but that of praiſing and adoring thee. Can there be an occupation more agreeable to thy children, than

that

that of paying thee this tribute? This hereafter is to be our eternal employment. The reſt, which, on this day, thou proſcribeſt to mankind, is a figure of that repoſe, which ſhall never be interrupted.—Into this we ſhall enter, if we are but faithful to thy commands. This hope is my comfort, the anticipation of that felicity, which thou reſerveſt for the next life. May I continually aſpire after this happy repoſe. Diſengage, O God! my affections from this fleeting world and it's periſhable toys.—Raiſe them up to thoſe manſions, where, in perfect ſecurity, I ſhall reſt on thy boſom: where, free from the afflictions and miſeries of time, I ſhall have no other occupation than to praiſe thee for eternity.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould be ſolicitous to employ the Sunday in the worſhip of the Deity.

LECTURE XLI.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

He, that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law.—Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law. Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

THE three firſt commandments mark out our duty in regard to the Deity; and the ſeven others direct our conduct in reſpect to our brethren. All the obligations, we owe them, are compriſed in this one precept; *Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf.*

To love our neighbour as ourſelves is to wiſh and procure the like good to him, as we do to ourſelves. There is nothing Chriſt urges more forcibly, than this love of our fellow-creatures. *The commandment, I give you,* he ſays, *is to love one another.* This he has made the badge, by which his diſciples are to be known Wherefore, whoever loves not his neighbour is no diſciple of Chriſt. He renounces his Goſpel, and the advantages therein promiſed. This was ſo well underſtood by the primitive Chriſtians, that among them there ſubſiſted a concord the moſt complete, a charity the moſt perfect. Inſomuch, that it might with juſtice be ſaid of them that they appeared to poſſeſs but one heart and one ſoul. The Heathens, who witneſſed it, were ſtruck with admiration, and exclaimed in rapture: "See how they love one another."

But

But, alas, how diſſimular the ſentiments and manners of their ſucceſſors! O amiable charity, thou diſtinguiſhing feature of genuine Chriſtianity, what is now become of thee! Nevertheleſs, my dear Theophilus, without this lovely virtue, the hope of ſalvation is vain.

For whoever loves not his neighbour, loves not his God, ſays St. John, that favorite of Chriſt, who was ſo thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of his Maſter. Hear his own words. *If any one ſaith he loveth God, yet loveth not his brother, he is a liar. How can he, that loveth not his brother, whom he ſeeth, love God, whom he ſeeth not?* To his dying breath, this Apoſtle of love never ceaſed to inculcate the doctrine of fraternal charity. It is told of him that, in the laſt ſtage of his life, he continued inceſſantly to repeat theſe words: *My dear children, love one another.* And being aſked why he reiterated the ſame thing ſo often, he made this reply: *It is the commandment of the Lord; and, if faithfully complied with, will alone be ſufficient.* In like manner, St. Paul reduces the whole law to this ſingle point. And in fact, whoever truly loves his neighbour, will be far from doing, in his regard, any thing forbidden by the authority of God. He will not inſult him; he will not offer him any violence; he will not do him an injury; he will not have a wiſh to deceive him, or to take advantage of his weakneſs.

But ſuppoſe not, my child, that, by the term neighbour, thoſe alone are to be underſtood, with

whom we are connected, whether as relatives or friends. *If you love only them, Chriſt ſays, that love you, what in this do you more than the heathens themſelves?* This appellation, then, includes all mankind: becauſe all have the ſame origin, the great, omnipotent Creator; all compoſe one family, of which God is the Father; all are made for the ſame end, an eternity of happineſs; and all are redeemed with one general ranſom, the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, who died a ſacrifice for all. This love muſt be extended to, and embrace our very enemies. The command of Chriſt is explicit, and clear beyond objection. *I ſay to you, love your enemies; do good to them, that hate you: pray for them, that perſecute and calumniate you.—Return good for evil; that you may be like your heavenly Father, who maketh his ſun to ſhine both on the good and on the bad.*

Say not that it ſuffices to wiſh no harm to thoſe, that hate or diſlike you; but that, as for loving or treating them with kindneſs, it is in a manner impoſſible. No, it is not impoſſible, to the grace of God; and this grace he will grant to ſuch, as aſk it of him ſincerely. It is God, that commands; and he commands not impoſſibilities. He would have us do what we can, and petition him for what we cannot do, in a firm confidence of his ſupport. Jeſus Chriſt has ſet the example of this generous charity, by praying for his executioners. Men, like ourſelves, have performed, by the aid of his grace, what we call impoſſible. Joſeph ſaved the lives of his

his prejudiced brethren, who had made an attempt upon his. David ſpared that of Saul, at the time when Saul wiſhed to bring deſtruction on him. St. Stephen prayed for thoſe, that were actually ſtoning him.

Thou, O God! art the fountain of charity: and thou haſt told us we cannot be thy diſciples, if we love not our brethren. This divine charity thou haſt taught us both by thy word and example. Grant me then the grace to love them ſincerely, as I love myſelf; and both to wiſh, and to do them all the good in my power. Teach me to love them, not from human conſiderations, but from motives of religion: and may nothing extinguiſh or weaken this charity. May it embrace all mankind; my enemies, as well as others. Yes, dear Lord! when I have any thing to ſuffer on the part of men, I will remember that thou didſt die for us, at the time we were thy enemies, and that thou didſt pray for them, who were putting thee to death. I renounce that revengeful ſpirit, which would prompt me to return evil for evil. I will induſtriouſly avoid doing any thing, that may offend or diſpleaſe them: and, to gain them to thee, I will endeavour to win them by every poſſible attention.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould do good to all, as far as in our power.

LECTURE XLII.

ON THE DUTY OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayſt be long-lived in the land. Exod. xx. 12.

TO impreſs more ſenſibly the importance of this precept, God was pleaſed to confirm it by the teſtimony of his voice; though he had previouſly engraved it on the hearts of mankind. This obligation he places at the head of the duties, that relate to our neighbour: and ſcarcely has he told us what we owe to himſelf, than he informs us what he requires in regard to our parents. A proceeding, which evinces that, next to the Deity, they juſtly claim the preference in our eſteem and affections.

This is the only commandment, to which he has annexed a temporal reward; having promiſed a long life to them, that obſerve it. Learn hence then, Theophilus, how much God takes to heart that you render to your parents the honor, due to them. See how advantageous, how indiſpenſable it is for you to treat them, as he deſires: Now the honor, you owe them, compriſes four obligations. You muſt *reſpect* them; you muſt *love* them; you muſt *obey* them, and you muſt *aſſiſt* them in their wants.

The firſt duty, therefore, I ſay of children, in relation to their parents, is *reſpect*; and a reſpect, that muſt be inviolable at all times and in all circumſtances.

cumſtances. This reſpect conſiſts in receiving with deference their advice and corrections; in ſpeaking to them kindly, in fearing to diſpleaſe them, and in ſtriving to conceal and to excuſe their defects.— "It is juſt," ſays a holy doctor, "that children "ſhould revere thoſe, to whom they are indebted "for their being. It would be an atrocious ingra- "titude to deſpiſe them, that are the ſource of "whatever they have." Parents, in regard to their children, are the ſubſtitutes of the Deity; they hold his place, and are the depoſitaries of his authority. To be wanting to them, is to be wanting to God himſelf. An injury, done to them, recoils upon him, whoſe repreſentatives they are. For which reaſon, in the old law, he ordered inſolence to parents to be puniſhed with the utmoſt rigor. *If any one,* he ſays, *utters injurious words againſt his father or mother, let him be put to death.*

The ſecond duty of children is to *love* their parents. But is there a neceſſity of proving this obligation? It will, doubtleſs, ſuffice to remind you of what they have already done for you, and of what they are actually doing. They gave your life: as ſoon as you were born, they began their tender care; and, in that helpleſs ſtate, you were their only occupation, as I may ſay: they nurſed you through your infancy; and however diſagreeable the attendance, you then needed, they gave it with the greateſt pleaſure. Recollect their attention to your wants, their ſolicitude for your well-

being,

being, their alarms for your health. And, to thi day, what trouble do they not take; what expences do they not incur, to procure you what is ſuitable. Can you ever ſufficiently love them, that love you ſo affectionately? A child, that did not love his parents, would be no Chriſtian: he would even be unworthy of the name of man: that of monſter would become him better.

The third obligation, a child lies under to his parents, is *obedience*. *Children*, ſays Paul, *be obedient to your parents; for that is juſt before the Lord.* Obedience will be the teſt of your reſpect and affection. The child, who diſobeys his parents, or who obeys them with reluctance only, has neither the reſpect nor the love for them, which they challenge. Avoid then a conduct, that, both in the eyes of God and in thoſe of mankind, is ſo offenſive and criminal. Obey them under all citcumſtances; and obey them with chearfulneſs. Remember that Chriſt himſelf has given you an example of the ſubmiſſion, he exacts. Though the Sovereign Lord of all things, he was obedient to his holy mother, and no leſs ſo to Joſeph, whom he conſidered as a father.

Finally, the fourth duty of children is to *aſſiſt* their parents in their neceſſities: for inſtance, in infirmity, in age, in poverty. On all occaſions, they are bound to help them, and to let them want for nothing, that they are able to procure. To be ſenſible of theſe obligations, it is enough to have a heart. A child ſhould be happy to have the power

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of returning to his parents a part of what he has received from them. To neglect this duty would be a ſcandalous ingratitude, of which no one could be capable, that had not previouſly ſuppreſſed all the feelings of nature. For which reaſon, the ſacred oracles expreſs themſelves with horror of a perſon, guilty of this crime. *How infamous*, they ſay, *is he, who abandons his father! And how accurſed the child, that gives uneaſineſs to it's mother*, viz: by refuſing to take care of her!

Was it then neceſſary, O God! to iſſue a diſtinct and formal precept, to teach me to love my parents? Did not my heart ſufficiently apprize me of this natural obligation? But thou wert deſirous to imprint more deeply the neceſſity of fulfilling it. By the help of thy grace, I will never be wanting in it. I will always reſpect thoſe, whom thou haſt made the inſtruments of thy power, in bringing me into life, and of thy providence, in maintaining it. Next to thee, I will love them. For what can be ſo near to me, as they, to whom I owe my exiſtence, my education and my all. I will be their conſolation, by an entire obedience and a ſubmiſſion without reſerve. I will be their ſupport in their old age, as they were mine in my infancy. Nothing ſhall alter my preſent ſentiments, which I feel to be their due. By this behaviour to them, I ſhall merit a ſhare in the bleſſings, which thou haſt promiſed to obedient and dutiful children.

The Practical Inference.

That we must in all things be submissive and attentive to our parents.

LECTURE XLIII.

ON THE DUTY OF SCHOLARS TO THEIR MASTERS.

Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch, as being to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief.— Heb. xiii. 17.

MASTERS, who are intrusted with the education of children, have, next to their parents, the chief claim upon them. Their business is to instruct them in religion, to teach them human sciences, to direct their conduct and to form their dispositions. A master should have for his scholar the sentiments of a father, and consider himself as bound to fulfil his obligations. The scholar therefore, on his side, ought to honor him almost as much, and to pay him the tribute of *respect, love, docility* and *gratitude*.

The scholar's first duty, in regard to his master, is esteem and respect. To your father, my Theophilus, you are indebted for your life; and he holds, relatively to you, the place of Almighty God. On this

this twofold title, you are obligated to reſpect him. And is not the maſter, who forms you to virtue and ſcience, in ſome ſenſe, the parent and father of your ſoul? Is he not, in reference to you, the interpreter of heaven? There is, properly ſpeaking, but one ſole maſter; viz. the eternal truth, the ineffable wiſdom. *This is the light, that enlighteneth every man, that cometh into the world.* The maſter, who inſtructs you, conſults firſt this light himſelf; and it is his duty and ſolicitude to diſcover it to you. It is God, therefore, that teaches you, by the means of your preceptor: and of conſequence with what awful reſpect ſhould you receive his inſtructions! On this ſubject, ſo intereſting to you, I will tell you a ſtory of the noted Theodoſius, and ſhew you the ſentiments of that truly great emperor, upon the matter now before us. Going one day into the apartments of his ſon, and perceiving that his tutor, Arſenius, was giving his leſſon ſtanding, while the royal pupil was ſeated, he teſtified his diſpleaſure at it. He made his ſon diveſt himſelf of the ornaments of his dignity; ordered Arſenius to ſit down, and commanded the young prince to take his future leſſons bareheaded and ſtanding.

Secondly, a ſcholar is bound to *love* his maſter. And of this obligation you will be eaſily ſatisfied, if you but obſerve the daily pains, your inſtructors take about you. For the improvement of his pupil, the maſter ſacrifices his time, his health, and, I may almoſt ſay, his life. He gives up his liberty, and reduces

reduces himſelf to a kind of ſervitude. He performs with patience the irkſome taſk of continually repeating the ſelf-ſame things. What a claim on your affections does he not acquire, by ſo many ſacrifices, tending wholly to your advantage? Nor ought the reprimands, he ſometimes gives you, to diminiſh your love of him, if you think reaſonably and juſtly. He reproves you from regard only and the deſire of your improvement. If he loved you leſs, he would not be ſo anxious about you. Is he obliged to uſe ſeverer means? He does it with reluctance, while his feelings ſuffer for it. Who ſhould correct your faults, if not the perſon, that is ordained to be your ruler and guide?

Thirdly, the pupil muſt be *docile*. As it is the duty of the maſter to inſtruct and inform, ſo it is that of the ſcholar to be docile and attentive. However great the preceptor's abilities, however unwearied his induſtry, neither his leſſons nor his care will be of any avail, if the pupil be intractable. One often meets with thoſe, that have gone through the ſtated courſe of a regular education with very little profit. They are unequal to the taſk, on which they are afterwards employed, and their ignorance hourly betrays them into the groſſeſt miſtakes. And would you know the reaſon? Inform yourſelf from thoſe, that knew them in their youth. They will tell you they were ſelf-conceited, refractory and head-ſtrong: that they would bend to no authority, liſten to no advice, nor ſubmit to

any

any reprimand: they made free with their maſter's character, and expoſed his defects: they took a malicious pleaſure in ſaying what ill they could of him, and in ſetting others againſt him. And what do we find the conſequence? They continue ignorant and obſtinate: they are at beſt uſeleſs to ſociety; and, in a word, they are, at preſent, bad citizens, becauſe, in their youth, they were unmanageable ſcholars. Copy them not, I pray: but follow the advice, which the Holy-Ghoſt gives you: *Son*, from thy youth, *receive inſtruction kindly; and even to thy grey hairs thou ſhalt retain the marks of wiſdom.*

Laſtly, *gratitude* to his maſter cloſes the liſt of the duties, to which the ſcholar is obliged. Perhaps, at preſent you are not ſenſible of your obligations to your inſtructors, nor of the ſervice, they render you. But the time will come, when you will comprehend the value of a good education; and then you will underſtand how greatly you are indebted to them. The advantages of education are beyond all price. A trifling ſalary is but a pitiful recompence to an aſſiduous maſter. The benefits, he confers, are as durable as life; and the gratitude of the pupil ought to know no other bounds.

It is thyſelf, who, in fact, art our Maſter, O God! They, that teach us, are but thy interpreters. They ſpeak to us in thy name, and they act by thy authority, when they inſtruct and correct us. Thou commandeſt us to reſpect, to love and to obey them. Enable me to diſcharge theſe eſſential obligations;

and

and give me a docile heart, to improve by their inſtructions. May I reſpect, in them, thy Supreme authority: and, if ſubjection be diſagreeable, may I bear it with patience, from a wiſh to pleaſe thee. May I imbibe a juſt ſenſe of the ſervice they do me; and may I repay ſo great a favor by, at leaſt, a ſincere attachment to them. Such a conduct as this, while it tends to facilitate my progreſs in learning, will, I hope, ſweeten the bitterneſs of their tedious functions.

The Practical Inference.

That children ſhould be tractable and obedient to their maſters.

LECTURE XLIV.

ON MURDER, &c.

Thou ſhalt not kill. Exod. xx. 13. *Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing.* 1. Peter iii. 9.

BY this prohibition, God forbids us to attempt the life of a fellow-creature; as alſo to take away our own, for any poſſible cauſe. But it regards not the execution of criminal juſtice; nor the uſe of that public authority, which is eſtabliſhed for the good of ſociety. The legiſlative power has a right to puniſh with death all ſuch, as notoriouſly infringe

infringe it's regulations. *The magiſtrate*, ſays St. Paul, *bears not the ſword in vain: for he is the miniſter of God, to execute his vengeance.* Again, a ſoldier, in battle, may lawfully kill his enemy, who, in his regard, is a public one, in obedience to his commander, and for the defence of his country. But no individual, without rendering himſelf culpable in a moſt atrocious degree, can deſtroy the life of another, to ſatisfy his own malignity. It would be an inſolent attempt upon the ſovereignty of God, in whoſe hands alone is the diſtribution of life and death. Murder is the greateſt poſſible crime, that can be committed between man and man, by depriving a fellow creature of what is moſt eſtimable to him. And of this horrid crime we become guilty not only by perpetrating it by our own act and deed, but alſo by inciting others to it, by advice or perſuaſion.

But the law of God is not content with prohibiting murder. It likewiſe forbids anger, quarrelling, hatred and contempt. So Chriſt himſelf explains this precept. His words are theſe: *You have heared that it was ſaid to them of old, thou ſhalt not kill; and whoever ſhall kill, ſhall be in danger of the judgment*; that is to ſay, of the vengeance and purſuit of human juſtice: *But I ſay to you, that whoever is angry with his brother, ſhall be in danger alſo of judgment. And whoever ſhall ſay to his brother*, RACA, a term of contempt, *ſhall be in danger of the council. And whoever ſhall ſay*, THOU FOOL, *ſhall be in danger of*

hell-fire. You ſee then, Theophilus, that, without ſtaining our hands with the blood of a neighbour, we are guilty in the ſight of God, and amenable to his bar, as often as we give way to anger or hatred. You ſee that his condemnation receives an additional degree of ſeverity, if to hatred be joined contempt: more eſpecially, if this contempt ſhews itſelf outwardly, in terms of inſult or reproach, or in any kind of opprobrious and abuſive mode of ſpeech.

Chriſt commands us to ſuppreſs all emotions of anger, and every deſire of revenge. He forbids all their effects, ſuch as injurious words and contemptuous behaviour: becauſe every thing of the ſort, even to the ſlighteſt breath of them, is a ſtep towards murder, and, unleſs checked in time, may poſſibly lead us to it. For which reaſon, St. John declares that, *whoever hateth his brother, is a murderer.* What then can we think of thoſe, who either give or receive a challenge, but that they are enormouſly culpable in the eyes of the Almighty? How impious, to imbrue their hands in the blood of a fellow-creature, for a ſlight affront or trifling jeſt; and to ſacrifice their own ſalvation and that of a companion to an imaginary point of honor! The Greeks and Romans, though mere heathens, were not ſo wretchedly miſled. They were paſſionately fond of glory; but their notions of this matter were more correct than ours. They placed it in ſhedding their blood in defence of their country, and only

uſed

uſed their arms againſt the enemies of the ſtate, and not againſt their comrades. Duelling is a crime as oppoſite to humanity, as it is to religion: as contrary to reaſon, as to the principles of the Chriſtian doctrine.

To take away one's own life is no leſs criminal and impious. Life is a truſt, which the Deity has committed to our protection; and which he enjoins us to preſerve, till it ſhall pleaſe him to redemand it. To diſpoſe of it without his permiſſion, and in defiance of his order, is to intrude upon the rights of him, who alone is it's arbiter. This crime is by ſo much the more horrid, as it is remedileſs and irretrievable. The ſuicide, by cutting ſhort the time of repentance, precipitates himſelf, without reſource, into everlaſting damnation. What a madneſs, for a paſſing uneaſineſs, the vexation of a moment, to fling oneſelf headlong into miſery interminable!

O God! to what extremities of violence does not unbridled paſſion hurry us! Permit me not to open my breaſt to either anger or hatred, which ſo quickly ſilence reaſon, and overpower all reflection. If ever I experience their emotions, enable me, by thy grace, to ſuppreſs them in their infancy. Give me that ſpirit of meekneſs, which thy doctrine ſo much inculcates, and thy practice recommends.—Thou haſt ſuffered before me, and far more than I can ſuffer. Expoſed to the malice of thy enemies, thou openedſt not thy mouth; much leſs didſt thou ſeek revenge againſt them, that inſulted thee. On

the contrary, thou ſuppportedſt with patience the injuries, heaped upon thee. Shall I deviate ſo widely from the bright example, thou haſt ſet me? Shall I be ſo feelingly alive to every appearance of ſlight, when I behold thee mute and calm amidſt the moſt grievous calumnies, and expiring on a croſs, in the act of praying for thy executioners? O Lord! ſupport my weakneſs, and give me the ſtrength to imitate thy pattern.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould carefully ſtifle the firſt riſings of paſſion.

LECTURE XLV.

ON SCANDAL.

Wo to the man, by whom ſcandal cometh. Matt. xviii. 7.

SCANDAL conſiſts in leading others to vice, or in ſeducing them from virtue. It is a murder of another kind, which, though it ſtrikes not the ſenſes, is not leſs real in the eyes of faith, nor leſs criminal in the ſight of God. Scandal kills the ſoul, by depriving it of grace, which is it's energy and life. For which reaſon, Chriſt utters the moſt dreadful threats againſt them, that unhappily occaſion it. *Whoever*, he ſays, *ſhall ſcandalize any of the little*

little ones, that believe in me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were thrown into the ſea. Judge, my dear Theophilus, of the enormity of this evil, by the expreſſions uſed by Chriſt to impreſs us with a horror of it.

Conſider the effects of ſcandal, and you will readily own the juſtice of the puniſhments, reſerved for it. And what are theſe effects? To oppoſe the deſigns of God of ſaving all mankind. *Your heavenly Father wills*, ſays Chriſt, *that none of his little ones periſh.* He has adopted all for his children; and his deſire is to ſave all. But ſcandal counteracts his intentions, by bringing deſtruction on them, that he wiſhes to ſave. The perſon, who gives ſcandal, renders void the effects of our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. He came into the world to liberate us; he ſhed his blood to reſcue us. But ſcandal robs him of thoſe ſouls, that he has bought at ſo great a price; it wreſts his conqueſts from him, and brings them into the danger of unutterable miſery, for whom he has merited an infinite happineſs.

A young man, for inſtance, is virtuouſly diſpoſed. Obedient to his ſuperiors, and obſervant of his duties, he is beloved by heaven, and experiences it's protection. But he has the misfortune to become acquainted with an unprincipled libertine, who ſets religion at defiance, who turns virtue into ridicule, and laughs at the profeſſors of it. The youth, ſtaggered by his converſation, ſhrinks at the

apprehenſion of his deriſion and raillery. Thus circumſtanced, the libertine goes further with him. He entertains him with licentious talk, gives him bad advice, and confirms it by his own example.—The eyes of the unhappy youth are now opened to what he was before ignorant of; his mind is warped by the force of bad impreſſions; and, his principles thus debauched, he becomes a ſlave to the like paſſions, a prey to ſimilar vices, as his infamous ſeducer. It was the deſire of Jeſus Chriſt that his ſoul ſhould be ſaved, and for this purpoſe he died. But the ſinner, by his ſcandal, effects it's perdition; and inſtead of eternal happineſs, which God had intended, expoſes it to certain and infinite miſery. What puniſhment muſt he not expect then? Or rather is there a puniſhment ſevere enough for him? Wretch! Thou wouldſt be ſhocked at the idea of polluting thy hands with the blood of a companion, and thou doſt him an injury, which is incomparably greater. Leſs cruel wouldſt thou be to plunge a dagger into his boſom, and deprive him of life. This ſoul, which thou haſt murthered, will eternally cry for vengeance, and it's cry ſhall be heared.

Wo therefore to him, who corrupts the youthful mind, by converſation or example. Wo to him, who ſeduces innocence from the path of diſcipline and virtue. Wo to him, who, by ſcornful raillery, diverts others from the purſuit of piety. Wo to him, who circulates books deſtructive of faith

or

or morals. Wo to him, who, by immodeſt pictures or lewd ſongs, ſpreads the contagion of vice. Finally, wo to him, who cauſes ſcandal in any manner whatſoever; or who, having it in his power, does not exert himſelf to prevent it. To all ſuch are imputable the ſins, that their ſcandal may occaſion, even after their deceaſe.

I did not, O God! know the full enormity of the ſin of ſcandal. I never conſidered it's conſequences, nor the terrible chaſtiſements, that await them, who give it. Permit me not to become to others an occaſion of ſin. For the future, I will be on my guard neither to do, nor to ſay, what may lead my neighbour into evil. Alas! Is it not ſufficient that I ſhall have to anſwer for my own tranſgreſſions, without adding thoſe of my brethren? If I have been ſo unfortunate as to ſcandalize any one, vouchſafe, dear Lord! to pardon me. I will ſtrive to repair it, by giving good example in future; and to edify my companions, by a faithful diſcharge of all the duties of my ſtate. Such is thy command, O God! expreſſed in theſe words; *Let your light ſhine before men, that, ſeeing your good works, they may glorify your heavenly Father.* This command I will execute; and endeavour, by my deportment, to inſpire others with a love of virtue. Grant me this grace, for the honor of thy name, and for the ſalvation of my own and the ſouls of my brethren, which thou valueſt ſo highly.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould watch all our words and actions, to avoid giving ſcandal.

LECTURE XLVI.

ON IMPURITY.

Thou ſhalt not commit adultery. Exod. xx. 14. *Flying the corruption of that concupiſcence, which is in the World.* 11. Peter i. 4.

EVERY ſpecies of impurity, whether by word or action is forbidden by the law of God.—And this prohibition extends to whatever may lead to, or prove an occaſion of this ſin; as exceſs in eating or drinking, licentious plays, immodeſt books, laſcivious pictures, indecent dreſs, &c.

In the black catalogue of vices, there is none more oppoſite to the ſanctity of God, or which he puniſhes with greater rigor, than the one now before us. We ſee dreadful examples, in the hiſtory of the Scripture, of the vengeance inflicted on it, even during this life. In puniſhment of this ſhameful crime, God deſtroyed the whole world, one ſingle family excepted, by the waters of the deluge: and, for the commiſſion of this ſame ſin, he conſumed with fire, hurled down from heaven, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, with the adjacent neigbourhood.—

Yet

Yet this tremendous chaſtiſement is but a faint reſemblance of the inextinguiſhable flames reſerved for ſuch, as imitate them. St. Paul pronounces, in general terms, that they ſhall be excluded from heaven. *Know*, he ſays, *that no fornicator nor unclean perſon ſhall obtain the kingdom of God.* And, again: *Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thoſe, that are addicted to lewdneſs, ſhall have part in God's inheritance.*

This crime ſhall be puniſhed even in the perſons of the heathens, and them, that know not God: becauſe it is contrary to reaſon, which is given all for a guide; and becauſe man, by yielding to it, vilely debaſes himſelf; and, ſuperior to beaſts, as nature has made him, he ſinks to a level with them, by an imitation of their brutality. But it is much more criminal and enormous in a Chriſtian, in one regenerated in Chriſt; becauſe moſt oppoſite to his vocation, which is to be guiltleſs and holy; moſt injurious to the Holy-Ghoſt, by profaning his temple; and moſt offenſive to Chriſt, by contaminating his members. *The will of God*, ſays St. Paul, *is that you be ſanctified and pure, and that you abſtain from all defilement. For he has not called you to uncleanneſs, but to purity and virtue. Know you not that you are the temples of God; and, if any one defile his temple*, by abuſing his body, *him will God deſtroy; for his temple is holy. Know you not*, he continues, *that your bodies are the members of Jeſus Chriſt? And ſhall I take away his members, to give them to a harlot?*

What

What a crime to proſtitute the temple of the Deity! How atrocious a ſacrilege to diſhonor his members! This idea, Theophilus, ought to ſtrike you with horror: and you will be confirmed in this way of thinking, if you reflect on the fatal conſequences, attending this vice. It impairs a man's health, injures his fortune, brings ruin on himſelf, and diſgrace on his family. A perſon, given to lewdneſs, becomes a ſcandal to his relations, and the ſcorn of his acquaintance, either miſerably periſhes in the flower of his age, or drags on a wretched life, in ignominy and ſorrow. But the effects of this vice are ſtill more pernicious in regard to the ſoul. It obſcures the underſtanding, and renders the mind incapable of any ſerious application. A perſon, enſlaved to it, can attend to nothing ſolid. His paſſion every where purſues him, and engroſſes all his thoughts. Every kind of employment is tedious, irkſome and diſguſtful. And the heart is yet more diſordered than the mind.—He conceives an almoſt inſurmountable averſion to prayer, and to every ſpecies of religious duties.—He becomes that *animal being*, of whom the Apoſtle ſpeaks, that comprehends nothing of the concerns of heaven. The very ſight of ſuch, as are virtuous, is diſtreſſing to his feelings; becauſe he conſiders their conduct as a tacit cenſure of his own. *He, who doth evil*, ſays Chriſt, *hateth the light, and cometh not to it, leſt his works be reproved.*

To

To the corruption of his heart ſucceed hardneſs and obduracy. For no vice ſo benumbs and ſtupifies the ſoul. His deareſt intereſts are neglected.—The divine promiſes and threats are equally contemned. Eternal happineſs or miſery in vain exert their influence. Every thing profitable is ſacrificed; every thing ſerious deſpiſed. He forgets what he owes to others; and diſregards what he owes to himſelf. Reaſon no longer guides him, but wild and impetuous paſſion. And while the public is witneſs to his intemperate folly, he himſelf is ſo blind, as not to ſee his own ſhame. Even faith yields to the ſhock, and abandons him to his fate: for religion and diſſoluteneſs can never live together. To ſtifle the clamours of conſcience, and to go on undiſturbed in his vicious purſuits, he begins by calling in queſtion the moſt univerſally received tenets, and quickly concludes by diſbelieving every thing—Hence final impenitence. He dies in his ſins; and appears at the bar of heaven beſmeared with the filth, with which his life was polluted: for *The diſorders of his youth ſhall penetrate his bones, and accompany him in the grave.*

My feelings, O God! on this ſubject are thoſe of terrifying apprehenſion. On the one ſide, I hear thy voice, informing me that impurity is abominable in thy ſight, and will moſt aſſuredly be followed by the moſt dreadful calamities. On the other, I am conſcious of an unhappy diſpoſition, that inclines me to this vice. I feel an imperious law

law, that oppoſes thy holy precept. It is not that I heſitate; for I will certainly obey thee. But what combats ſhall I not have to ſuſtain! What dangers am I not expoſed to! I am fearful of betraying thee. My weakneſs alarms me. For what can I do, of myſelf, againſt ſo potent a foe? I will not truſt to my ſtrength: if I do, I ſhall be vanquiſhed. I will confide wholly in thy grace, which will render me invincible. Support me, O Lord! and do not quit me for an inſtant, leſt my enemy prevail. With thee I can do every thing; but without thee nothing. Thou commandeſt me to be chaſte and pure: give me what thou commandeſt. No, my God! Thou wilt not forſake me: ſo thou haſt promiſed, and thou art true to thy word. I would rather die than offend thee: and, theſe being my ſentiments, I may hope for thy aſſiſtance. Yes, thou wilt be with me in the trials, I muſt expect to encounter. This is my conſolation. For, with the help of thy grace, what have I to fear? Under the wings of thy protection, I ſhall conquer and triumph.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould conceive the moſt lively abhorrence of the crime of impurity.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLVII.

ON BAD COMPANY.

Depart from me all ye, that are workers of Iniquity. Pſ. vi. 9.

AS the principal occaſions of the ſin of impurity are bad company, immoral books, and obſcene plays, it is neceſſary to ſhew you their danger, in order to caution you againſt them. I will begin by bad company.

Nothing, my dear Theophilus, is more dangerous to your morals than the company of libertines, who, themſelves become callous to the fear of the Almighty and to the impreſſions of modeſty, incite others to ſin by word or example. If you form a connexion with people of this ſtamp, your virtue will ſurely pay for it. The holy Spirit exhorts us frequently to ſhun bad company, and to break off all acquaintance with them. *My ſon*, he ſays, *if the wicked ſolicit thy company, go not with them. If they ſay to thee, come with us, be careful not to follow them: for, if thou doſt, thou wilt ſoon become as vicious, and as corrupted as they.* Will you contemn this admonition? Informed by truth itſelf that vice is a peſtilence; that the wicked communicate it's infection to all, who come near them; and that, by frequenting their ſociety, one acquires a way of thinking, of ſpeaking and of acting as they do, will you expoſe yourſelf to the hazard of contracting their

their evil habits, and of periſhing with them? Would you like to live with people infected with the plague? Doubtleſs, you would not, for fear of the conſequences. Behave in like manner in regard to thoſe, whoſe converſation and example might endanger your ſalvation.

Bad company is to the ſoul what a contagious diſtemper is to the body. As they, that are inwardly decayed, communicate by the breath their corporal infection, ſo the wicked impart by converſation the diſorders of their heart. What are the topics of the diſcourſe, with which they amuſe themſelves? What the grounds of their talk, when free from reſtraint? The uſual matter of their converſation is whatever flatters the paſſions. Every thing indecent they have ſeen, every thing ſcandalous they have heard, is then the ſubject of their mirth. Sometimes, they give a looſe to the moſt profligate liberties; and even go ſo far, as to glory in their infamy, and impudently boaſt of crimes, which they never committed: modeſty is ridiculed; and piety becomes the object of their deriſion and ſcorn. How perilous a ſituation for a youth, that is ſtill virtuous, unleſs he immediately breaks away from ſuch pernicious companions! The poiſon of ſin ſteals into his heart. At firſt, timidity overawes him: he has not the courage to check them, nor to cenſure their proceedings: he is afraid of diſpleaſing them, or of exciting their raillery, if he will not follow their example. By degrees,

degrees, he gets familiar with what once ſeemed ſo ſhocking: he tamely abandons himſelf to the like irregularities, and concludes by becoming aſhamed of his paſt innocence and virtue.

Is it not then with reaſon that St. Auſtin exclaims: "How fatally deſtructive is the company "of the profligate!" He himſelf, in his youth, had experienced its baleful influence. The example of his companions had drawn him into vice, as he tells us in his writings. "I remember," he ſays, "the time, when I never ſhould have thought of "committing ſuch a ſin; no, not even have been "tempted to it, had I kept to myſelf. O, how "much are we our own enemies, when we make ac-"quaintance with bad people? To what can their "friendſhip lead, but to pervert the powers of "reaſon to an almoſt incredible degree? For, as "ſoon as any of them ſaid; come, let us go and do "ſo; there was not one that did not follow, and "bluſh to feel conſcious that he was ſtill capable of "bluſhing." You here ſee to what a paſs evil company will carry us. Avoid it, therefore, I entreat you. Shun all ſuch connexions, with the greateſt poſſible abhorrence. The friend of the vicious will become as vicious as they. *He, that loves the danger, ſhall periſh in it.* The beſt education, the moſt untainted innocence are no ſecurity againſt them. Truſt not to your diſpoſitions, nor to your firmeſt reſolves. One ſingle converſation is ſufficient to ſhake, and finally overturn the moſt rooted

rooted in virtue. *The wiſe man,* ſays the word of God, *fears evil, and turns away from it: the fool thinks himſelf ſafe, and periſhes in the ſnare.* I once more then, my dear child, conjure you, with St. Paul, to decline the company of thoſe, whoſe manners are reproachable.

Of this, my God! I here make a firm determination. I will avoid all ſuch acquaintance. In vain ſhall they ſtrive to entice me, by the falſe appearances of friendſhip. This I will conſider as a ſnare, to draw me into vice; for their ſole aim is to inſtil into my heart the venom of their own. Not ſatisfied with offending thee themſelves, they endeavour to acquire accomplices and ſharers in their guilt.—Every ſtone do they turn to ſeduce others from thy ſervice. Can I poſſibly have any connexion with them, without hazarding my ſalvation? Alas, O Lord! I am already but too ill diſpoſed, through the inclinations of corrupt nature. What therefore ſhould I be, with the addition of the perſuaſion and example of the wicked? On the contrary, I will ſeek a prop to my weakneſs, in the ſociety of the virtuous. No other friends will I have, but ſuch as fear and love thee.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt ſhun with the greateſt care, the contagion of bad company.

LECTURE

LECTURE XLVIII.

ON IMMORAL BOOKS.

Many, that had followed curious arts, brought their books together, and burnt them before all. Acts xix. 19.

A ſecond occaſion of the ſhipwreck of innocence and purity of morals is the reading bad books. They fill the mind with dangerous thoughts, and crowd the imagination with obſcene ideas. The venom ſpreads to the heart; and, corroding it's vitals, effectually corrupts it.

How many have fallen victims to theſe vehicles of infection! How many have to bewail the raſh curioſity, that unhappily induced them to peruſe ſuch works! They are now ſenſible that the irregularity of their conduct, the loſs of their health and the ruin of their fortune is chiefly owing to the operation of this cauſe. The reading licentious writings firſt heated thoſe ſeeds of corruption, we all bear in our hearts; the fruit of the primary, original ſin.—The paſſions, thereby inflamed, bade defiance to control.

One ſingle bad book is enough to pervert a thouſand young people. It paſſes through a variety of hands; the contagion circulates, and infects a whole family. But the effect is ſtill more ruinous, if it be one of thoſe abominable writings, in which, together with wanton intrigues, laſcivious anecdotes and impaſſioned deſcriptions, are joined impious

maxims and irreligious principles, calculated to baniſh the fear of God, and to make faith itſelf totter. Theſe reſtraints once trampled on, into what exceſſes will not they run, who have levelled the barrier! What lengths will they not go! And what is there to ſtop them? Religion is the ſureſt ſafeguard and protection of virtue; the ſtrongeſt fence, that can be oppoſed to the violence of the paſſions. Deſtroy but this fence, and the torrent will ruſh in, and ſweep every thing before it.—Faith, while it continues it's hold, keeps the door open for repentance. If we have the misfortune to act wrong, at leaſt we condemn and reproach ourſelves for it. But, if faith be loſt, we are deprived of the means of returning to our duty. The evil is without remedy; the miſchief without reſource.

Alas! my Theophilus, our own unhappy age, which is deluged with ſuch productions, affords but too many proofs of the depravity, they occaſion.—Fatal experience has taught us more upon this lamentable ſubject, than ever was known to the wiſdom of our forefathers. On every ſide, we hear complaints of the miſconduct of youth, of their libertiniſm, and of their preſumptuous contempt of parental authority. What was formerly but levity, and the giddineſs of their age, is now become profligacy, and corruption of heart. And do you wiſh to be informed of the cauſe of all this miſchief?—Profane and immoral books, which are multiplied without end, are among the foremoſt of it's ſources.

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And would to God the evil ſtopped here. But the youth, whoſe principles are ſapped, and whoſe morals are vitiated by impious writings, becomes equal, when matured, to every deſperate attempt.—Witneſs the wretched cataſtrophe of a neighbouring kingdom, at the recital of whoſe atrocities humanity, as well as religion, ſtands appalled and ſhudders: a cataſtrophe, in great part at leaſt, to be aſcribed to the influence of licentious pens. Beware then, my child; and liſten, if yet untainted, to the admonitions of a friend. Never read any books, that may eventually affect either your principles or morals. If any ſuch be offered to you, reject them with abhorrence. The temptation of peruſing them, if they remain in your hands, will be found irreſiſtible. And if already you have been injured by this criminal curioſity, do juſtice to yourſelf, and abjure it in future. Imitate, in this regard, the conduct of St. Tereſa. She was educated, from her infancy in the ſchool of devotion, but by degrees fell into a languor, that nearly proved her ruin. She tells us herſelf that this deplorable alteration was principally cauſed by reading romances. But God favored her with the grace of diſcovering her error; and ſhe found, in books of piety, the antidote to her tepidity and the recovery of her fervor.

Say not that you read ſuch writings for the ſake of improvement, to cultivate your mind or to form your ſtyle. All theſe advantages you may

draw from ſources more pure and ſafe. Excellent compoſitions, in every branch, and which may be read without danger, are univerſally to be met with.—Conſult the advice of ſome intelligent friend. He will point out more, that unite the utility of ſcience with the graces of ſtyle, than you will be able to run through in the courſe of a long life. If you give the preference to ſuch, as are calculated to corrupt you, it will be but candor to own that paſſion directs your choice.—I add that all the advantages, the world can afford you, are not worth being purchaſed at the expence of your innocence.

It is thyſelf, O God! who ſpeakeſt to us by the medium of good books. To read them is to hear thee, the fountain of information, the ſource of all truth. On the contrary, it is the devil, we converſe with, whenever we give our time to the peruſal of bad books. Theſe organs he makes uſe of to effect our deſtruction. Shall I then be ſo miſerable, ſo injurious to myſelf, as to chooſe ſuch a preceptor, and take leſſons from him? What can I expect to learn in his ſchool of impiety? He is the father of lies, of error and of vice. He would miſguide my underſtanding, and deprave my inclinations. He would ſtir up within me ungovernable paſſions, that would operate my ruin, and make me wretched even in this life, and plunge me into perdition in the life to come. I therefore cordially renounce all ſuch inquiſitive curioſity, as cannot be

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gratified but by the loſs of thy grace, the forfeiture of my innocence and the riſk of eternal happineſs.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt reſolutely decline reading all dangerous books.

LECTURE XLIX.

ON PLAYS.

Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. 1. John ii. 15.

PLAYS are inimical to virtue in general; but eſpecially ſo to purity. If then, my dear Theophilus, you wiſh to preſerve unrifled the precious treaſure of grace, keep at a diſtance from them.

Not to ſpeak of thoſe plays, in which modeſty is openly inſulted, and which, ſhunned by the better ſort, are frequented only by people of rigorous principles, how great danger is there not even in them, that are ſtyled ſentimental and refined, wherein nothing groſs is admitted, nor any expreſſions made uſe of, than can ſhock the ears of delicacy! In ſpite of this varniſh of elaborate decency, it is, at bottom, the ſame paſſion, that conſtitutes their eſſence. Impure love is the ſpring, by which every

piece moves, that is introduced upon the ſtage. It is this darling paſſion, that chiefly makes a play intereſting, and crowds the houſes. Whatever is therein heared, whatever is ſeen is calculated to awaken, to inflame and to ſtrengthen it. Even the ſhew of decorum increaſes the peril; by diminiſhing that horror, which vice would excite, were it uncovered and barefaced. The ſtudied veil of modeſty gives additional force to that ſeductive inclination, which is the ruin of all, who wilfully cheriſh it.

And to inſpect this matter more cloſely: what does one hear from the ſtage? Animated narratives of the various emotions, that a paſſion, irritated by oppoſition, can excite in a breaſt, which it occupies and fills. This paſſion is there repreſented as, at worſt, an infirmity; and, to render it more intereſting, is attributed to ſome perſonage, whoſe qualities and character are otherwiſe engaging. The beauty of the ſcenery, the graces of poetry, the force of declamation and the charms of muſic are all employed to blow up a flame, which, independently of ſuch incentives, already too much endangers the hearts of the audience.—Again, what does one ſee there? Objects dangerous in themſelves, and rendered ſtill more ſo by the diſpoſitions of the ſpectators. The poiſon enters by every ſenſe. How then ſhall the ſoul defend herſelf againſt ſuch a combination of enemies; amidſt ſuch numerous ſolicitations, that enervate and relax her! The

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moſt ſolid and ſteady virtue could not long ſupport the trial. What then will become of that of the youth, who voluntarily expoſes himſelf? How almoſt irreſiſtibly bewitching muſt his ſenſations be, from the circumſtance of his age and the ebullition of his blood! No, it cannot be doubted but innocence there receives many a grievous and deadly wound.

Nevertheleſs, you will meet with thoſe, that endeavour to juſtify the uſe of ſuch amuſements.—They will name them to you, who are reputed good people, and yet frequent the play-houſe; and they will tell you they therein experience no ſort of bad impreſſion. But believe them not. Thoſe, who talk in this ſtrain, are either deceived themſelves, or impoſe upon you. And the cauſe of their illuſion is that they are not accuſtomed to obſerve their heart, nor to attend to what paſſes there. We find no trouble, while we ſwim with the current: reſiſtance alone diſcovers the difficulty.

But, in anſwer to what may be urged to perſuade you to go to plays, pay attention to three principles. The firſt of theſe is grounded on the palpable oppoſition of theatrical entertainments to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity. A Chriſtian, at baptiſm, makes a formal renunciation of the pomps of the devil and the vanities of the world. But where do theſe pomps more triumphantly reign: where are theſe vanities more oſtentatiouſly exhibited, than in the illuſions of the play-houſe? The ſpirit of

Chriſtianity is a ſpirit of modeſty and of devotion. Can there be any thing more repugnant to theſe than the maxims of the ſtage?—The ſecond principle reſts on that ſentence of Chriſt; *He, that loves the danger, ſhall periſh in it.* Whatever may be ſaid to the contrary, there is certainly danger, though I do not ſay to all in an equal degree, within the precincts of ſuch places; and the generality of thoſe, that attend them, pay for it with their innocence. And how can the perſon be vindicated, who voluntarily expoſes himſelf to a peril of this conſequence? Such a one either truſts too much to his ſtrength, and thus is guilty of preſumption; or, if conſcious of his weakneſs, may be juſtly arraigned of folly, for wantonly ruſhing upon probable deſtruction.—The laſt principle is this that, by going to plays yourſelf, you encourage others to do the like, who thereby miſerably periſh. Remember what St. Paul ſays, that not only they are culpable, who commit evil themſelves, but thoſe alſo, that countenance it. Your preſence would mark, in the cleareſt terms poſſible, your approbation and ſupport.

O my God! how replete is the world with danger! How many ſnares are laid for virtue! But by the aſſiſtance of thy grace, I may be able to avoid them all. If the world, to ſeduce me, holds out it's treacherous baits, and ſeeks to dazzle me by it's pomps, thou doſt inform me of the peril, and empower me to eſcape it. Thou acquainteſt

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me that my weakneſs would infallibly betray me; and that my only ſecurity is in flying from it's vanities. I alone then ſhould be to blame, were I ſo raſh as to expoſe myſelf. Can I blindly regard thoſe amuſements as innocent, in which every thing is laid out to enkindle illicit paſſion: in which ſuch principles are broached, as openly militate againſt thy law; and in which my preſence would embolden others to put their ſalvation to the riſk? If ever I ſhould be ſo unhappy as to fall into ſuch an error, vouchſafe to diſpel it. Preſerve me from being miſled by the example of thoſe, who only are advocates for plays, becauſe they find in them the fuel of a favourite paſſion; or becauſe they are too timid to make head againſt the ſtream. Make me ſenſible that the more artfully vice is diſguiſed, the more dangerous it is; and that poiſon is more ſubtle, when dexterouſly prepared.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt be firm in denying ourſelves the entertainments of the ſtage.

LECTURE

LECTURE L.

ON THEFT.

Thou ſhalt not ſteal. Exod. xx. 15.

THE Deity, to whom belongs every ſpecies of property, diſtributes it as he pleaſes. He requires us to reſpect the order eſtabliſhed by his providence; and forbids us to take from others what his bounty has given them.

This law, my dear Theophilus, is engraved on your heart. Conſult that, and it will tell you that you are not to do to others, what you would not have them do to you. Was a perſon to ſeize what belongs to you, you would deem it an injuſtice; and ſo it certainly would be. But has not that ſame perſon an equal right to complain, if you violate his property. Without juſtice, ſociety could not ſubſiſt. To injure a neighbour in his poſſeſſions, therefore, whether by violence or fraud, is ſtrictly prohibited. *The unjuſt*, ſays St. Paul, *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* Now, this ſin may be committed many different ways. Let us, firſt, ſay a word or two on what may concern thoſe of your age.

It ſeldom happens that young people, with any tincture of education, are ſo deſtitute of principle, as to thieve from ſtrangers. A mind, poſſeſſed with the ſentiments of honor, recoils at the idea of a crime ſo baſe. But the youth may be found, perhaps, who does not equally reſpect what belongs

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to his parents; and who may ſuppoſe there is no great harm in ſtealing from them. However, it is no more permitted to rob them than others. It is equally theft, and moſt ſeverely ſtigmatized by the Spirit of God. He declares that the perſon, who robs either his father or his mother, without allowing it to be ſinful, participates in the diſpoſition and guilt of the murderer. How ſo? Becauſe the wretched youth, who ſteals from his parents to gratify his paſſions, ſeems to long for their death, which appears to him procraſtinated, in order to come at what they have. A diſpoſition, which implies a corrupt and cruel heart; a heart callous and dead to all the feelings of nature.

It is an injuſtice alſo to withold from others what they have a right to challenge of us; as debts in regard to creditors, wages to ſervants, or their hire to workmen. "*When any one ſhall have worked for thee*, ſays Toby to his ſon, *pay him directly, and let not the reward of the labourer reſt with thee.* Again, it is an injuſtice not to reſtore whatever may have been intruſted to you; to keep any thing found, without making due enquiry for it's rightful owner; and, in fine, to do a neighbour any kind of harm in his property; as by deſtroying, or ſpoiling it; whether the miſchief occaſioned be effected by yourſelf, or whether it be done him by others, at your inſtigation.

And obſerve, my child, whenever we have wronged a perſon, it is not ſufficient to be ſorry for it,

it, and to aſk pardon of God. The thing taken muſt be returned, and the damage made good.—Without reſtitution, it is vain to expect forgiveneſs, or to hope for ſalvation. There is no entering into heaven with other people's property. What then, you will ſay, ſhall I be eternally ruined, if, after injuring a neighbour, I find myſelf ſo circumſtanced as not to be able to make him amends for it? No: God does not command impoſſibilities. In this caſe it ſuffices to be ſincerely deſirous to acquit yourſelf of this obligation, as ſoon as may be, and to uſe your beſt endeavours to diſcharge it completely.

Thou, O God! doſt forbid me to hurt my neighbour's goods; and, if it ſhould happen that I commit an injuſtice, thou doſt enjoin me to repair it. I feel the equity of this law, and ſubmit to it cordially. I wiſh others to be juſt to me: I ſhould therefore be juſt to them. Thanks to that integrity, which thou haſt implanted in my breaſt, and to the good education, thy providence procures me, that I abhor the thoughts of ſtealing, and that there is not a vice, to which I feel a ſtronger averſion.—Confirm theſe good diſpoſitions; and grant I may never deviate from the rules of ſtrict probity; that, in whatever ſtation of life, they may regulate my conduct, and that I may ſanctify this probity by the principles of religion; without this, it would be but natural and altogether human; and although it might attract the good opinion of men, it could not

not deſerve a recompence from the hands of thy juſtice.

The Practical Inference.

That a chriſtian honeſty ſhould direct us in all things.

LECTURE LI.

ON LYING.

Thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs againſt thy neighbour. Exod. xx. 17.

GOD is truth itſelf. Whatever therefore offends againſt the dictates of truth, is injurious to God. And this is the reaſon why he ſo repeatedly forbids us to utter what is falſe.

Avoid lying, ſays the Apoſtle, *and let every one ſpeak according to the truth.* The ſacred oracles aſſure us that *the mouth which lies, kills the ſoul; and that God will deſtroy them, who ſpeak untruths.* This vice is repugnant to the purpoſes of ſociety. For why was ſpeech given us, but to communicate our ideas, and mutually impart our thoughts? It is an abuſe, therefore, of this privilege, to uſe it to convey a meaning, which we know to be falſe. And this principle is ſo evident that the Heathens themſelves were conſcious of it's force, and that many of them adhered

adhered to it with a rigid exactneſs. It is related of one of the moſt diſtinguiſhed among them, that ſuch was his love and reſpect for truth, that he could not think it lawful to exceed it's bounds, even in laughing and jeſting: and of a ſecond, that he never told a lie himſelf, nor would ſuffer it in others, without expreſſing his diſpleaſure. What a ſhame that Chriſtians ſhould be leſs ſcrupulous than Heathens, on an article of ſuch moment! How happens it that children, brought up in the arms of virtue, ſhould conſider a lie as nothing; have recourſe to it for every trifle, and even make it a matter of amuſement and ſport?

But a lie, which in itſelf is ſo odious, becomes far more criminal, when it injures a neighbour, or tends wrongfully to defame him. As for example, when one attributes a vice to him, with which he is not tainted, or a fault, that he has not committed: and this is termed *calumny*. So foul is the malignity attached to this crime; that the mention of it is enough to ſhock a good heart. *The tongue of the calumniator*, ſays the Spirit of Wiſdom, *is a keen edged ſword, that inflicts deadly wounds; and his mouth diſtils a poiſon more venomous than that of the viper.*-- For it attacks not only the fortune, but alſo the character of a perſon; a thing the moſt dear to him, and the moſt eſtimable in life.

But what ultimately completes the atrociouſneſs of this crime is when a calumny is advanced in the face of the legiſlature, and confirmed by an oath.

oath. The perſon, who thus ſolemnly bears teſtimony to a falſhood, beſides a cruel injuſtice to an innocent fellow-creature, whom his perjury goes to ruin, moſt impiouſly inſults the Deity, whoſe ſacred name he profanes. As far as in his power, he makes God an accomplice in his guilt, and proſtitutes his veracity to the ſupport of abandoned vice. Such was the conduct of the two old wretches, that accuſed the chaſte Suſanna. This virtuous woman, whoſe oppoſition to their baſe deſigns had excited their rage, muſt undoubtedly have been the victim of their ſlanderous charges, had not God raiſed up Daniel, and filled him with his Spirit, to unmaſk the impoſture and reſcue the oppreſſed.—Her iniquitous accuſers were fortunately detected, and puniſhed with death, as their villainy merited.

And this is the fate, to which all are expoſed, who bear falſe witneſs againſt their neighbour.—God frequently permits the calumny to be diſcovered, and the like puniſhment to overtake the deteſtable calumniators, as they themſelves wiſhed to draw on the heads of the innocent. But although they ſhould eſcape the fallible eye of man, they could not evade that of a rigorous judge, from whom nothing is concealed. Nor let them hope to appeaſe him by a ſecret repentance or ſteril tears. The injuſtice committed, with it's whole train of conſequences, muſt be fully compenſated. They muſt reeſtabliſh that honor, which they have iniquitouſly violated: a thing, that cannot be done without

out criminating themſelves. Should their own reputation be the forfeit of their calumny, even this muſt be ſacrificed, to reintegrate that of their neighbour, when injuriouſly tarniſhed. See then, Theophilus, how difficult it is to obtain the forgiveneſs of this crime, and learn to avoid it.

Far from me, O God! be that horrid malignity, which would urge me unjuſtly to accuſe a fellow creature. By an effect of thy grace, the very thought of it chills me. But I feel not the like abhorrence and deteſtation of a lie: a vice but too common in thoſe of my age; which, however, is offenſive and odious in thy ſight. And what can I want more to make it odious to myſelf? The uſual occaſion of it is that I wiſh to hide my own faults, and thoſe of my companions. But how great my deluſion, when, with the deſign of concealing an offence of ſmall importance, I commit another, that deſerves the moſt rigid puniſhment! I will henceforth confeſs candidly whatever fault I may fall into; and I will never tell a falſehood to diſguiſe or extenuate it. A ſincere avowal will be it's beſt reparation, and the moſt effectual means of procuring thy forgiveneſs. And, although I may have reaſon to look for a reprimand, I will rather ſuffer it patiently, than infringe thy commandment. Support me, O God! in theſe virtuous ſentiments; and permit me not to deviate from the line of ſtrict truth.

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The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould never tell a lie deliberately and knowingly.

LECTURE LII.

ON DETRACTION.

Brethren, detract not one another. James iv. 11.

DETRACTION conſiſts in revealing to others the ſecret faults of our neighbour. The matter, thus related, is ſuppoſed to be true; or elſe it would be calumny; but it is likewiſe unknown. As long as his miſconduct, in whatever line it be, continues undivulged, he retains his reputation, of which the diſcovery of it to the world unjuſtly deprives him. Of courſe, it is a ſin to reveal his hidden faults. It is violating the command of God, who moſt poſitively enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourſelves. Should we like to have our faults held up to the public eye? Unqueſtionably, we ſhould not. Let us learn, therefore, to throw a veil over thoſe of our fellow-members.

The ſacred oracles number detraction among the crimes, that exclude from heaven. St. Paul aſſures us that *The detractor ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God.* St. James, inflamed with zeal againſt this

deteſtable vice, energetically paints it in colors the moſt odious. *The tongue*, he ſays, *is a devouring fire, a world of iniquity, a reſtleſs evil, replete with deadly poiſon.* Like a ſpark, carried abroad by the boiſterous wind, detraction ſpreads havock; ſets every thing on flame, and blackens, at leaſt, the character, which it cannot conſume. It is the peſt of ſociety, ſubverſive of peace, and the parent of confuſion, whereſoever it reaches. It is a malignant ſource of hatred and revenge; an execrable collection of every thing baneful.

The detractor is guilty of all the ſins, that his crime gives birth to. He ſins in them, who repeat the matter after him; and he ſins even in thoſe, that wilfully liſten to him. For obſerve, it is forbidden not only to ſpeak ill of a neighbour, but alſo to lend an ear to defamatory talk. Were there no hearers, there would be no detractors. But of all kinds of defamation the baſeſt is that, by which one perſon relates to another what a third may have ſpoken, or committed againſt him. This ſort of repetition, which we uſually call *tale-bearing*, almoſt always produces ſuch a ſpirit of animoſity, and deſire of revenge, as terminate in laſting and irreconcileable enmity. The party accuſed, ignorant of what has been ſaid, can neither juſtify nor explain himſelf. The malice of ſuch ſecret whiſperers is traced in Holy-writ in the following terms: *The words of the tale-bearer appear ſimple and unintereſting; but they ſilently ſink into the bottom of the heart.*

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And to ſhew how nefarious it is, the ſacred penman ſubjoins: *There are ſix things, that the Lord hates, and the ſeventh he deteſts; and this ſeventh is the perſon, who ſows diſcord among his brethren.* At all times then, Theophilus, follow the advice of the Holy Ghoſt: *Have you heared any thing injurious or prejudicial to your neighbour? Repeat it not; but let it die within you.*

Remark, however, that it is lawful to diſcloſe the faults of another to thoſe, who, by their ſituation, are authoriſed to correct them; eſpecially when ſuch faults are likely to prove contagious. In this caſe, they may, and ought to be revealed, to prevent further miſchief. For inſtance, you are acquainted with the ill-conduct and miſbehaviour of a companion; you know that he corrupts others by his diſcourſe and bad example. You are then obliged to inform his ſuperiors; and ſo far from trenching on charity, by thus diſcloſing his defects, you are thereby fulfilling it's moſt preſſing obligations. For it is loving our neighbour truly, to preſerve him from the ruin, into which he is plunging himſelf, and precipitating others. It is the perfection of charity to prefer his ſalvation, and that of thoſe he lives with, to every other conſideration.

Though detraction, in itſelf, be not ſo criminal as calumny, it is more pernicious in it's conſequences; ſince the miſchief, it occaſions, is almoſt irreparable. In fact, ſhould we have imputed a fault to a perſon wrongfully, we may, and are bound, to retract our words. By recantation, we

heal the wound, and reeſtabliſh his good name.—But when the evil divulged is true, we cannot unſay it: for this would be telling a lie, which, in no caſe, is allowable. On this account, though we were to repent of the ſin, it would be ſcarcely poſſible to reſtore him what we were the occaſion of his loſing. We are obliged, however, to make him what ſatisfaction we can, by ſaying all the good we know of him; thereby to do away, or, at leaſt, to diminiſh the injurious impreſſions, our defamation may have cauſed.

I ſee, O God! how offenſive it is to reveal, without neceſſity, the hidden faults of my neighbour, and to tarniſh his reputation. I now firmly reſolve to avoid this crime, of which the conſequences are ſo fatal, and ſo hard to repair. Preſerve me, I beſeech thee, from that wretched malevolence, which diſpoſes us to detract and ſpeak ill of one another. Remove from me that levity, which leads me ſo often to give a looſe to my tongue. Put a guard upon my lips, that not a word may eſcape them to the prejudice of others. But it is inſufficient not to cenſure and detract them myſelf. Thou forbiddeſt me, beſides, to liſten to thoſe, that do ſo. Teach me how to behave on all ſuch occurrences; to turn the converſation, or, at leaſt, by reſerve, to ſhew my diſpleaſure; and, if poſſible, to retire from ſuch dangerous company. At theſe times, be thou my light, to direct me what to do; and my ſtrength, to enable me to execute it boldly.

The

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould never ſpeak ill of any one.

LECTURE LIII.

ON RASH JUDGMENT.

Judge not, and you ſhall not be judged: condemn not and you ſhall not be condemned. Luke vi. 37.

GOD forbids us, Theophilus, not only to ſpeak ill of our neighbour, but alſo to harbour a bad opinion of him, on light or imperfect grounds. *Judge not haſtily*, ſays Chriſt; *but judge according to juſtice.*

Wherefore we are not allowed to judge our brother by conjectural ſurmiſes or equivocal appearances. To conclude him guilty, without ſufficient proof, is an unjuſtifiable raſhneſs, which neceſſarily expoſes us to condemn the innocent. He has a right to our eſteem, until he be convicted; and to withdraw it from him, without well-founded reaſons, is doing him an injury. The crime of raſh judgment, therefore, is contrary to juſtice. Nor is it leſs ſo to charity. This latter virtue, the characteriſtic of Chriſtianity, inclines us to think advantageouſly of, and to put a favorable conſtruction on the actions of other people; excuſing and palli-

ating what is not manifeſtly wrong in them.—*Charity*, St. Paul ſays, *thinks no evil.* It only then ſees a fault, when convincingly clear; and only then gives credit to it, when evidently proved.—And to decide by this rule, let us put ourſelves in our neighbour's place. Should we like, without ample grounds, to be thought guilty of a bad action, or ſubject to a particular defect? That we ſhould not is indubitable. Let us avoid, therefore, doing to others what we are unwilling they ſhould do to us.

But our judgment would be ſtill raſher, and by many degrees more criminal, were we to attribute bad intentions to works laudable in themſelves; and to ſuppoſe a vicious principle, where the action is uncenſurable. Nevertheleſs, nothing is more common than this malignity of mind, which ſeeks to detract from what is apparently good, by aſſigning improper motives to it. Is a perſon regular in his conduct, and attentive to his duties? They, that want the courage to imitate him, regard him as a hypocrite, who only acts this part, to gain the eſteem of his ſuperiors. But to judge thus of intentions and the ſecret diſpoſitions of the mind, is it not uſurping the place of God, who alone can ſee the heart, and be acquainted with it's ſprings? Beſides, what opinion muſt we have of him, who ſuſpects others to be ſo corrupted and ſo infamouſly baſe? A bad heart alone can ſuppoſe ſuch diſſimulation.

Yes,

Yes, this fund of malevolence, which is ſo ready to diſcover vice under the ſemblance of virtue can only, I ſay, proceed from a black and tainted heart. The good man thinks differently. Sincere himſelf, he believes others to be ſo equally. He is edified at a behaviour, which accords with regularity, and never imagines the garb of piety to be the cloak of irreligion. His thoughts are employed on the conſideration of his own defects: he pays no attention to thoſe of his neighbour, and, by this prudent conduct, he preengages in his favor the tribunal of the Deity. For Chriſt has promiſed to judge us, as we judge our brethren. This comfortable reflection was the ſolace of an ancient anchoret at the hour of his death. During life, he had not been remarkable for any particular degree of zeal: notwithſtanding which, when about to leave the world, he appeared uncommonly tranquil. His Superior, apprehenſive this might be the effect of a miſtaken confidence, enquired his reaſons.— "My ſecurity" replied the dying man, "is founded "on the words of Chriſt. I never have judged, "much leſs condemned, any one; and the Son of "God has aſſured us that we ſhall not be judged "ourſelves, unleſs we judge others."

Alas! how ſhall I preſume, O Lord! to cenſure my neighbour, when I have ſo many faults, wherewith to reproach myſelf? For theſe alone ſhall I be reſponſible at the bar of thy juſtice.— Theſe alone, ſhould I condemn, therefore, to deprecate

cate thy wrath. Can I wiſh, by blaming my brethren, to expoſe myſelf to the danger of being rejected by thee? I ſtand in need of mercy, and thou doſt offer it on eaſy terms; viz. on the condition that I refrain from judging others. My ſalvation then is in my own hands; and I will ſtrive to profit by it. Indulgent to my neighbour, to myſelf only will I be ſevere. I will keep my eyes open to my own defects, and ſhut to the infirmities and imperfections of other people. I will excuſe their faults: and ſo far from aſcribing ſiniſter motives to the good actions, I may ſee them do, I will be edified by their conduct, and endeavour to copy them.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould always think favorably of the words and actions of our neighbour.

LECTURE LIV.

ON IMMODEST THOUGHTS.

With all watchfulneſs keep thy heart. Prov. iv. 23.
Bleſſed are the clean of heart, for they ſhall ſee God. Matt. v. 8.

HAVING poſitively forbidden every act of impurity, God prohibits, in like manner, all the thoughts and deſires of it. And this prohibition,

bition Chriſt confirms in the following words: *You have heared that it was ſaid to them of old; Thou ſhalt not commit adultery.—But I ſay to you that whoever looketh on a woman, to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

Think not then, Theophilus, that, to fulfil the law of God, it is enough to refrain from impure and unchaſte actions. Such deſires are alſo criminal. God, *who ſearches the reins*, will not be ſatisfied with an outward purity. He no leſs requires the purity of the heart. He will not allow us to deſire what he forbids us to do. The very thought of the ſin makes us culpable in his eyes, when deliberate and voluntary; that is to ſay, when we dwell upon it with reflection, and take a wilful pleaſure in it.—*Bad thoughts*, ſays the Scripture, *ſeparate from God*; and, of courſe, kill the ſoul, unleſs reſolutely rejected. The divine law, therefore, attacks the very root of the evil, and ſtifles it in it's birth. It is not uſual all at once to go ſo far as criminal actions; there is a gradation even in vice. The miſchief begins by indecent thoughts, entertained with ſatisfaction: to theſe ſucceed deſires, and to deſires external acts. *It is from the heart*, Chriſt ſays, *that proceed bad thoughts, fornication, adultery and murder.* At the head of the ſoul liſt he places evil thoughts: inaſmuch as they are the ſoul and principle of vice. The true way, therefore, to prevent the illicit deſires of the heart is to reject bad thoughts; and the true

way

way to obviate the commiſſion of lawleſs actions is to ſuppreſs the deſires of them.

But how, you will ſay, ſhall we preſerve ourſelves from the intruſion of bad thoughts? You cannot, I confeſs, my child, prevent their moleſting you; but you may hinder yourſelf from conſenting to them. Your being troubled with ſuch ideas depends not on you: but it depends on you not to give occaſion to, or to take pleaſure in them, when they come. Obſerve, I have told you that the thought of evil is a crime: but I mean only when it is free, and wilfully indulged. If you give no occaſion to ſuch thoughts, whether by reading dangerous books, by a too great familiarity of converſation, by unguarded looks and actions; or if, as ſoon as they preſent themſelves, you reject and expel them, no guilt will attach to you from them: for without liberty and conſent there can be no ſin. They are temptations indeed: but temptation is not a crime. An undiſturbed peace, exempted from combats, is not to be expected. Virtue does not conſiſt in not feeling, but in reſiſting courageouſly the aſſaults of our paſſions. Remember my advice, then. Never give occaſion to bad thoughts: and if, in ſpite of your vigilance, they obtrude themſelves upon you, turn your attention from them, raiſe your heart to God, and immediately apply to ſomething intereſting and uſeful.

A powerful remedy againſt theſe ſuggeſtions is to find employment for the mind, and never to permit

permit it to be idle. Such is the counſel of St. Jerom, who practiſed it himſelf. Be but obſervant of this rule, and you will have nothing to apprehend. If the devil importunes you, liſten not to him, and your victory will be ſecure. Throw your ſelf into the arms of God: he will be your protector, and the ſupport of your infirmity. The temptation, you have combated, ſo far from aggrieving you, will become the matter of your triumph, and your conſtancy will merit for you an immortal crown of glory.

Thou ſeeſt, O Lord! the trials, I am perpetually expoſed to. Thoughts, which thy law condemns, intrude upon my mind: imaginations, that I deteſt, offer violence to my heart. My reſiſtance ſhall be reſolute: but thou knoweſt my weakneſs, and the ſtrength of my adverſary. His reiterated attacks make me tremble for my ſafety. O God! my hope! Withdraw not thyſelf from me. Say to my ſoul, *I am thy force and thy ſafeguard.* Thou alone canſt diſpel the illuſions of Satan, that threaten my ſalvation. Ariſe then, O Lord! and my enemies ſhall be diſperſed. Command; and my ſoul ſhall recover it's tranquillity. Thou haſt promiſed not to ſuffer me to be tempted above my ſtrength. I ſhall be ſure to conquer, if but faithful to thy grace.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould turn away our minds, at the firſt appearance of immodeſt thoughts.

LECTURE

LECTURE LV.

ON COVETOUS DESIRES.

Thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbour's houſe; nor any thing that is his. Exod. xx. 17.

AS the Deity had before prohibited to take, or retain the property of other people; ſo he here forbids us to covet or deſire it. But note the difference between the law of God and that of man. The latter regulates external actions only; becauſe the outſide alone is viſible to man: while the former reaches to deſires and the ſecret wiſhes of the mind; becauſe the deepeſt receſſes of the heart are open to the eyes of God.

But you conceive, I hope, that it is not forbidden to deſire the goods of others, when you purpoſe to get poſſeſſion of them by fair and lawful means. Otherwiſe, no ſort of commerce or traffic would be licit. A perſon, that buys a houſe, or whatever elſe you pleaſe, deſires it indeed: but this deſire is allowable, when the means, uſed to acquire it, are conformable to law and equity.

What therefore is prohibited is to covet the goods and property of others, when they are unwilling to part with them. Such was the crime of Achab, which God puniſhed ſo ſeverely. To extend his demeſne, he wiſhed to get poſſeſſion of the vineyard of Naboth. This the latter would not ſell, it being the inheritance of his family. Irritated by the

the refuſal, the king ſuborned falſe witneſſes; had him ſentenced to death for ſuppoſititious crimes, and ſeiſed on his vineyard.—Again, what is forbidden in this place is the inordinate love of riches; an eagerneſs to procure them; that greedineſs of wealth, which St. Paul ſtyles the root and the ſource of all evils, and which God, by the prophet, accurſes in theſe terms, *Wo to you, that add houſe to houſe, and land to land, as if the earth was intended for your uſe alone.*

I am ſenſible this is not the vice, Theophilus, of thoſe of your age. But there is a period, when this paſſion takes place of diverſions and infantile amuſements; and it is not improper to warn you againſt it's future attempts. Nothing then, I ſay, is more oppoſite to the ſpirit of the Goſpel, than this thirſt after riches; which, intent upon amaſſing, is never ſatisfied with God's liberality; and which, from an ideal apprehenſion of coming to want, is perpetually accumulating, as if we were never to die. The man, that is a ſlave to this miſerable paſſion, is wholly engroſſed with its reſtleſs avidity.—He thinks of it in the day; he broods over it at night, and to it's gnawing pangs he ſacrifices his health and his life. From his eagerneſs to graſp an happineſs, which imagination repreſents to him as conſiſting in wealth, he becomes piteouſly wretched, and waſtes his years in tortures, that death alone ends.

And

And what acts of fraud and palpable injuſtice are not produced by this vice! Conſcience and ſalvation are conſidered as nothing, provided the treaſure be ſwelled. In a word, money is the ſole Deity, to whom the miſer offers incenſe. For which reaſon, St. Paul ſtigmatizes this paſſion with the name of *Idolatry*. And for the ſame reaſon, we are aſſured by Chriſt that we *cannot ſerve two maſters*; that we *cannot love God and Mammon* together. Not that the Almighty forbids us to poſſeſs riches; ſince it is his providence that beſtows them. But he forbids us to be poſſeſſed by them; that is, to ſettle our affections on them, and to place our happineſs in their enjoyment. It is not wealth itſelf, that will be the cauſe of our damnation, but the inordinate deſire and luſt of obtaining it. And what, in fact, is it, that we long for ſo ardently? Tranſient, periſhable riches, which it coſts an infinity of pains to acquire, and no leſs ſolicitude to preſerve; riches, of which we ſhall certainly be deprived at laſt, without the power of retaining, or taking away any part of them; finally riches, the loſs of which, when compelled to forſake them, will be ſevere in proportion to the attachment, we bore them. Can ſuch things, as theſe, be productive of happineſs? The advice therefore of David is commendable and proper: *If you have riches, attach not your heart to them.* And if you have them not, my child, neither long for nor covet them, according to the counſel of your Saviour: *Seek not to ſtore up treaſures on earth, where*

where ruſt conſumes and the worms deſtroy: but lay up treaſures in heaven, where are neither ruſt nor worms: for where your treaſure is, there will your heart be.

Permit me not, O God! to become a prey to the vice of avarice. If thou art pleaſed to give me riches, keep my heart from cleaving to them, and teach me to uſe them for the purpoſes of thy ſervice. If thou thinkeſt proper to withold them from me, may I be content with the lot, which thy providence aſſigns me. The riches, that I aſk of thee, are neither ſilver nor gold, which, at beſt, would not add to my happineſs, and perchance, by my abuſe of them, might prove the occaſion of my ruin. But what I earneſtly ſolicit is thy grace, O Lord! in this life and thy glory in the next. This is that firm and deſirable bleſſing, which alone I ought to covet and to endeavour to acquire. If even poverty be my portion, I ſhall ſtill be rich enough, if I do but fear thee, and fulfil thy commandments. This of all treaſures is the firſt, and which I do not ſtick to prefer to every temporal advantage.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould be content with what we have

LECTURE

LECTURE LVI.

ON THE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH: AND FIRST, ON THE OBSERVANCE OF HOLYDAYS.

CHRIST has authoriſed his Church to make what ordinances, ſhe may deem neceſſary; and has enjoined us to obey her. Thoſe only does God own for his children, who reſpect her as a mother.

This power is veſted in her paſtors, whom he appoints to direct us. Of them Chriſt has ſaid: *He, who hears you, hears me: and he, who deſpiſes you, deſpiſes me.* And in another paſſage: *He, that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen or a publican.* This power, delegated to her thus by Chriſt, the Church has at all times exerciſed. From the commencement of Chriſtianity, the Apoſtles took upon them to frame regulations, the obſervance of which St. Paul endeavoured to inculcate, in his various expeditions, and the faithful, to whom he propoſed them, as readily ſubmitted to. It is therefore incumbent on us likewiſe to receive with reſpect the different ordinances of the Church. It would be diſobeying God himſelf to be undutiful to them, that he commiſſions to govern us.

The precepts of the Church may be reduced to ſix, whoſe obligation is univerſal. The firſt of them enacts that we keep holy the feſtivals, which are interſperſed throughout the year, by refraining from ſervile

ſervile works, and by devoting ſuch days to the calls of religion. Some of theſe feaſts are ordained to commemorate the myſteries of our Redeemer; ſuch as his incarnation, his nativity, his circumciſion, his manifeſtation to the Gentiles, his paſſion and death, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, the deſcent of the Holy-Ghoſt, and the inſtitution of the Euchariſt.—Others are deſigned to honor, in the Virgin Mary and the Saints, the graces God conferred on them, during their abode on earth, and the bliſs he now crowns them with, in the raptures of heaven.

In the old law, the Deity appointed for the Iſraelites a certain number of feaſts, to perpetuate the remembrance of his exertions in their behalf; and it is on this divine model that the Chriſtian Church alſo has inſtituted her feſtivals. Her intention therein is to honor the Almighty, to inſtruct the faithful, and to animate their devotion, by ſetting before their eyes, in the courſe of the year, the bleſſings of God and the examples of the Saints.—The ſolemnity of the divine office, the aptitude of the ceremonies, and the exhortations of the miniſters, are perfectly calculated to fan the flame of piety, and to invigorate thoſe ſentiments of gratitude and love, that we owe to the Supreme Being. They afford likewiſe to the ignorant an opportunity of inſtruction, whereby to become acquainted with the hiſtory of each feſtival. This duty the Church preſcribes to her paſtors; and enjoins parents to take care that ſuch incentives to

religion be not unknown to their children. The like God himſelf inculcated to the Jews. Having ordered them to immolate the paſchal lamb, and to celebrate yearly the feaſt of unleavened bread, he added the reaſon: *When thy ſon ſhall aſk thee, ſaying, what is the meaning of this? Thou ſhalt anſwer; it is the victim of the paſſage of the Lord; when, deſtroying the firſt born of the Egyptians, he omitted our houſes.*

Wherefore, Theophilus, to ſanctify the Holy-days, you ſhould unite with the Church, ſtudy the myſtery of the day, bleſs the Lord for his mercies, and ſolicit a ſhare in them. And, if it be a feſtival ſacred to the memory of the bleſſed Mary or the Saints, you ſhould endeavour to excite yourſelf to an imitation of their virtues; that, by copying their lives, you may deſerve to be aſſociated to a participation of their bliſs; and for this purpoſe, implore their interceſſion at the throne of grace; thence to obtain that aſſiſtance, which your neceſſities demand.

O God! How reſpectable are the laws of that enlightened Church, which thou haſt eſtabliſhed for our guidance! The obligations, ſhe lays upon us, are enjoined in thy name and by virtue of thy authority. I bow to them, therefore, with all poſſible deference. Enable me by thy grace, to conform to her intentions in the celebration of Holy-days. The end, ſhe propoſes, is to confirm us in the knowledge and belief of the myſteries, which thou haſt operated in our favor; to renew in us

thoſe

thoſe ſentiments of affection and gratitude, that we owe thee for ſo many bleſſings, and to encourage us to trace the ſteps, that will conduct us to thee. Grant that I may ever be ſolicitous to correſpond with her views. Give me the requiſite diſpoſitions to reap the fruit, ſhe deſigns by the inſtitution of her feſtivals; that, by remembering theſe myſteries were accompliſhed for my ſake, I may ſtrive to diſpoſe myſelf to partake in their effects.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould inform ourſelves of the ſubject and hiſtory of each feaſt; and make it, that day, the matter of our devotion.

LECTURE LVII.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF HEARING MASS ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.

OF all the exerciſes of piety, to which we are ſummoned on Sundays and Holydays, that of hearing maſs is the moſt eſſential; and of this the Church has iſſued a particular precept.

The ſacrifice of the maſs is the ſublimeſt act of worſhip, and that, which renders to the Deity the moſt perfect tribute of honor. The obligation of

offering it, on days appropriated to his ſervice, is coeval with the Church. We read in the acts of the Apoſtles that, on the firſt day of the week, which we at preſent term Sunday, the faithful aſſembled to break bread; that is, to offer the ſacred victim, and to partake in the diſtribution of it. All the writings, that relate to the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, make mention of the holy myſteries, that were celebrated on Sundays. In them we ſee the order and the fervor of thoſe meetings; and we there find, to our conſolation, the model of what to this day is practiſed by ourſelves. The community maſs, in which, now a days, the prieſt offers the ſacrifice in the midſt of his people, is a tranſcript of what was obſerved by the primitive Chriſtians.—And this maſs, in preference, you ought to aſſiſt at.

In the beginning of the Church, the only lawful aſſemblies were thoſe, at which the biſhop preſided perſonally. In proceſs of time, as the Chriſtians became more numerous, each dioceſs was divided into different pariſhes; to which the biſhop deputed prieſts, to inſtruct and govern them in his name, to celebrate the divine myſteries and to adminiſter the ſacraments. Since the introduction of this method, the faithful are ſuppoſed to attend the maſs of their paſtor, with a ſimilar preference. This regulation is found eſtabliſhed in various Councils, and renewed from age to age. Some of the Councils even go ſo far, as to threaten thoſe with excommunication, who, without a juſt impediment,

diment, abſent themſelves three ſucceſſive Sundays from the maſs of their rightful paſtor.

You ſee, Theophilus, of what importance the Church conſiders this duty; ſince ſhe menaces the neglect of it with the moſt ſevere of her inflictions. Beſides, this injunction is founded on the weightieſt reaſons. Each congregation is a family, of which the paſtor is the head. And is it not juſt that the members ſhould aſſemble to pay to God, in union with their head, the ſolemn worſhip of adoration? The parochial maſs, if I may be allowed ſo to call it in our unſettled condition, is offered for the community at large, united under one paſtor. Ought they not all, therefore, to join with him in this auguſt and ſolemn function? The inſtructions, there given, are addreſſed to them in particular; and are more adapted to their wants, of which their own paſtor is the beſt judge, than any other can be.

To ſatisfy this precept, it is, moreover, requiſite and eſſential to hear it throughout. To come, when it is already advanced, and a conſiderable part of it over, would be infringing this obligation. It muſt alſo be heared with attention, with reſpect and with devotion. It is not enough to be preſent only. You ſhould join with the prieſt, who ſpeaks to the Almighty in the common name of all, and offer yourſelf to God, with Jeſus Chriſt and his Church. To be wilfully diſtracted, is neither hearing maſs, nor fulfilling this precept. It is rather affronting your Redeemer, renewing the inſults of

mount Calvary and mocking religion. And here again I muſt repeat what I have elſewhere inculcated; viz. that of the days, ſet apart for the ſervice of the Deity, it is not ſufficient to give an hour to the obligation of hearing maſs. The whole of them, as far as poſſible, muſt be devoted to God.—The Church places this act of worſhip at the head of religious duties; but ſhe enjoins it not ſingly.—And ſhe urges it principally; becauſe a matter of the greateſt moment, and ſuch as cannot be diſpenſed with, but for ſatisfactory reaſons.

Among the duties marked out for Sundays and Holidays, thy Church, O Lord! requires me to attend the great ſacrifice. And this ſhe enforces by a ſpecial commandment, from which neceſſity alone can claim a diſpenſation. She wiſhes me, beſides, to aſſiſt at the maſs, that is ſaid for the congregation. I ſubmit to her injunctions, and will endeavour to comply with them, as far as in my power. I know that public acts of piety are more advantageous than ſuch, as are only witneſſed by the cloſet. My zeal becomes languid, when unſuſtained by that of my brethren. My prayers are not accompanied with the fervor, that attends them, when in conjunction with the faithful. Thou haſt ſaid that, when two or three ſhall join in prayer, thou wilt be found in the midſt of them. But thy preſence is ſtill more ſenſible, when a whole congregation pours forth it's common vows, in union with the paſtor, whom thou haſt conſtituted it's leader.

The

The Practical Inference.

That, on Sundays and Holidays, we ſhould be punctual in going to maſs; and frequent, as far as poſſible, the chapel we belong to.

LECTURE LVIII.

ON THE ANNUAL CONFESSION OF OUR SINS.

THIS obligation the Church impoſes by the Council of Lateran, in the following terms: "Every individual of the faithful, that ſhall have "attained the years of diſcretion, ſhall confeſs his "ſins, to his own paſtor, at leaſt once a year."

And obſerve, Theophilus, the Church hereby lays two diſtinct injunctions on us. Firſt, to confeſs our ſins once, at leaſt, annually, when capacitated ſo to do by age and diſcretion; that is to ſay, when capable of diſcriminating between good and evil: and ſecondly, to make this confeſſion to our own lawful paſtor. By this twofold regulation, ſhe was deſirous to obviate two different abuſes. In the firſt place, to limit thoſe, who for many years abſented themſelves from the tribunal of penance, and cankered in their vicious habits: and in the ſecond, to prevent us from recurring purpoſely to ſtrangers, with a view to obtain more eaſily the ſentence of abſolution, without amending our lives.

Wherefore, to ſatisfy this precept, you muſt repair, once a year at leaſt, to the penitential tribunal, and make a faithful confeſſion of your ſins to your own proper paſtor; unleſs he gives you leave to make it to another prieſt. In catholic countries, this reſtrictive rule is ſo generally adopted, that they, who, for particular reaſons, confeſs to any other, than their legitimate paſtor, are obliged to preſent to him a certificate of their confeſſion. But in our ſituation, where circumſtances do not permit ſuch a regularity of method, it ſeems allowed to confeſs to any prieſt acknowledged and empowered by the biſhop. The confeſſion muſt be made however.

And, although the Church exacts but one confeſſion annually, that ſhe may give us no diſguſt; ſhe deſires, nevertheleſs, that we have recourſe to it much oftener. This deſire ſhe intimates ſufficiently by thoſe words, *at leaſt*, which ſhe ſubjoins to the precept. Wherefore, though, to obey her commands, it abſolutely ſuffices to confeſs once a year; yet this is by no means ſufficient to correſpond with her intentions; eſpecially, when one has had the misfortune to fall into mortal ſin. God wills that ſuch, as are conſcious of this evil, ariſe without delay. In this unhappy caſe, therefore, they are bound to addreſs themſelves to ſome prudent director, to conſult his advice on the ſteps to be taken. The precept of the Church, ſo far from impeding their timely converſion, only goes to prevent

vent them from becoming rooted in their crimes. Sin is a wound of the ſoul. When wounded in body, do we neglect for any time to ſeek for a remedy? It is an illneſs, infinitely more dangerous than any, to which the body is liable. When this is attacked, do we wait a whole year without calling in help?

Beſides, experience ſhews that one confeſſion a year is not ſufficient to the ſupport of a ſpiritual life. They, that confine themſelves to this, are too frequently engaged in habits of vice, which they do not chooſe to relinquiſh; and the confeſſion, they then make, is of a piece with the reſt. By which means, this commandment of the Church is ſtill left unſatisfied. For, while ſhe enjoins her children this annual confeſſion, ſhe obliges them alſo to approach the ſeat of repentance with ſuitable diſpoſitions. To preſent oneſelf at the confeſſional without ſufficient examination, or a ſincere contrition, is not complying with her orders. On the contrary, it is increaſing the load, one is already oppreſſed with.

You will aſk me, perhaps, at what time the Church requires us to diſcharge this obligation? The preciſe time ſhe has not fixed. But, as ſhe orders us, by the very ſame canon, to communicate at Eaſter, it is plain ſhe deſires this confeſſion ſhould be made ſo, as to ſerve for a preparation to the paſchal communion. Preſent yourſelf, therefore, at the tribunal of reconciliation before the concluſion

ſion of Lent, and enquire of your director how to prepare for that great work.

Thou haſt given us, O Lord! a cure for the diſorders of the ſoul. The ſacrament of penance is a ſalutary bath, in which we are happily cleanſed from the defilements of ſin. The Church commands us to reſort to it humbly, at leaſt once in the year. Not but that ſhe wiſhes us to frequent it much oftener: but ſhe deſires to be indulgent to the weakneſs of her children. And is it poſſible that a law ſo conſiderate and mild ſhould ſtill find tranſgreſſors? Shall I myſelf be one of the number? No, my God! I will never neglect a remedy, which thy Church offers ſo kindly. Neither will I reſtrict myſelf to what ſhe commands; but I will fulfil her intentions. As ſoon as I perceive my conſcience defiled with the guilt of ſin, I will repair without delay to this purificative laver. Can I continue wilfully in a ſtate, wherein I feel myſelf to be thy enemy and an object of thy averſion? I know that ſin, unretracted, leads gradually to other ſins. I will therefore haſten to thy miniſter, to eaſe my wounded conſcience, and to be reconciled to thee.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould have recourſe to confeſſion, when conſcious of mortal ſin.

LECTURE

LECTURE LIX.

ON THE PASCHAL COMMUNION.

THE fourth precept of the Church is contained in the words, that directly follow thoſe already recited from the Council of Lateran: viz. "Let each one reſpectfully receive, at leaſt at the "feaſt of Eaſter, the ſacrament of the Euchariſt; "unleſs, by the advice of his director, and for ap- "proved of reaſons, he abſtain from it for a time. "If he fail ſo to do, let the entrance of the Church "be forbidden him, during life; and, after his "death, let him be deprived of chriſtian burial."

Judge, my dear Theophilus, of the conſequence of this precept, by the threats fulminated on ſuch, as preſume to overlook it. If our indulgent mother decrees the moſt direful penalties againſt ſuch of her children, as neglect to comply with this paſchal obligation, it is becauſe ſhe knows the neceſſity under which they labor, of receiving this celeſtial aliment. She has learnt from Chriſt himſelf that, unleſs we eat his fleſh, and drink his blood, we ſhall have no life in us. For which reaſon, ſhe commands all the faithful, when capable of diſcrimination, to communicate once a year at leaſt, within the paſchal term; that is to ſay, between Palm-Sunday and Low-Sunday, each of them included; and that with the reſpect and devotion due to this venerable ſacrament.

What

What induced the Church to lay this obligation on her children, was the indifference of too many of them for this life-giving food. The primitive Chriſtians communicated frequently. They conſidered the Euchariſt as the daily bread of their ſouls. No greater cauſe of grief to them than to be deprived of the uſe of it. In courſe of time, charity growing cold, this divine ſacrament was neglected, and many became ſo tepid, as to let whole years elapſe without approaching the holy table. To put a ſtop to ſo great an evil, the Church iſſued her mandates that all her children, under the moſt rigorous menaces, ſhould, at leaſt at Eaſter, receive the bleſſed Euchariſt. But although ſhe enjoins them only to communicate once in the year, her wiſh is, nevertheleſs, that they do it much oftener; and that particularly on the feaſts, which ſhe has inſtituted for our ſanctification. By communicating at Eaſter, therefore, we literally accompliſh the precept of the Church; but if we limit ourſelves to this, we ſhall fall ſhort of her deſires. In fact, it is hardly to be ſuppoſed that one ſingle communion, in the courſe of twelve months, can be ſufficient to maintain us in the life of grace. It is even to be feared that they, who are ſo indifferent about this moſt intereſting work, do not ſatisfy the precept.—Becauſe they expoſe themſelves to the danger of communicating unworthily: and an unworthy communion, ſo far from fulfilling the injunctions of the

Church,

Church, is an inſult to her authority and a moſt grievous ſacrilege.

The Church, moreover, requires that we communicate *with reſpect*; which reſpect conſiſts principally in bringing to the ſacred banquet a conſcience uncontaminated by mortal ſin It is to evince this intention, that ſhe would have us poſtpone our paſchal communion, whenever there be a reaſonable and juſt occaſion for it: among which occaſions, the want of an opportunity of purifying ourſelves properly is to be numbered in the firſt place. But you muſt obſerve that the time of this delay ſhould be employed in preparation, and be made as ſhort as poſſible. For, although the term allotted for the performance of this duty be finally cloſed, yet the obligation ſubſiſts, until religiouſly diſcharged. It is a debt, from which we are not releaſed by having paſſed over the ſtated period; but which continues in force againſt us, till duly acquitted.

This law of the Church, O God! is too much to my advantage to permit me to tranſgreſs it. For what a happineſs is it for me to have a ſeat at thy table, to receive thy ſacred body, and to be united to thee, in a manner the moſt intimate! O incomprehenſible bleſſing! So far from being ſatisfied with the letter of the precept, I will run frequently to thy altar, with all poſſible eagerneſs. Thou deſireſt, dear Lord! and, actuated by thy ſpirit, the Church recommends to me to preſent myſelf often

at

at thy adorable banquet. This I will endeavour to do; eſpecially at the ſeaſons devoted to piety. The more frequently I partake of this bread of Angels, the more happy ſhall I be. Should my unworthineſs compel thy miniſter to ſeclude me from it for a time, I will humbly acquieſce in his prudent advice; and will employ the delay in bewailing my miſery, in purifying my conſcience, and in fitting myſelf, as ſoon as poſſible, to be readmitted to thy myſteries.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould do our beſt to communicate, not only at Eaſter, but alſo at each of the indulgences.

LECTURE LX.

ON THE PRECEPT OF FASTING.

THE Church commands us to faſt throughout the ſeaſon of *Lent*, ſome certain *Vigils*, and three days at the commencement of each quarter of the year, which are regularly marked, and uſually called *Ember Days*. Faſting conſiſts in making one meal only in the courſe of the day, and that not before noon, and in abſtaining at thoſe times from whatever food the Church prohibits.

We denominate *Lent* the forty days preceding the feſtival of Eaſter; and the faſt of this period is of the moſt early date, even of Apoſtolic inſtitution.

What

What a ſanction does this law receive from an origin ſo remote, and ſo truly reſpectable! What an additional ſupport from a practice ſo general, and ſo uniformly maintained! The faſt of lent was eſtabliſhed in imitation of that of our Saviour, and to prepare us to celebratethe paſchal ſolemnity. It was always obſerved with greater rigor than the other faſts; in which the meal allowed was taken after the canonical hour of *None*, that is, about three in the afternoon: whereas, in lent, it was deferred till the concluſion of *Veſpers*, or about ſix in the evening.

Throughout this penitential ſeaſon, the faithful lived in retirement, interrupting their reſt at night with tears of compunction; ſpending a conſiderable part of the day in prayer and pious reading, and feeding the poor with the ſavings, they made from themſelves. This zeal was perpetuated through a ſucceſſion of ages. But relaxation crept in at length. The meal, by degrees, was forwarded to noon; when, ſtill to retain the appearance of ancient diſcipline, the evening office was advanced; which is the reaſon why, in lent, veſpers are ſaid before dinner. At the ſame time, a ſlight refreſhment towards night began to be introduced, as a help to keep the faſt; and this the Church at preſent tolerates, under the name of a *collation*; provided, however, it be ſmall, and cannot be regarded in the light of a meal. For it is eſſential to the faſt that one only meal be taken in the day.

The

The *Ember-days* were appointed with a view to conſecrate, by works of penance, the four ſeaſons of the year; to ſolicit the bleſſing of God on the fruits of the earth, and to implore him to provide his Church with ſuitable miniſters; for it is at theſe times, in general, that ordinations are conferred. Laſtly, *Vigils* are days, which precede the principal feaſts; and they obtained this appellation, becauſe, formerly, the faithful met on the eve of the great ſolemnities, and ſpent a part of the night in the exerciſes of devotion, as ſtill is the practice on the eve of Chriſtmaſs. We faſt on theſe occaſions, the better to diſpoſe ourſelves to celebrate the feſtivals, and to reap from them the advantages, deſigned by their inſtitution.

The law of faſting is general and obligatory on all. They alone are exempted, whom either age, infirmities, or laborious employments incapacitate from obſerving it. Of courſe, it is a grievous ſin not to keep the faſts preſcribed, unleſs lawfully diſpenſed with. To break them, without neceſſity, is to ſin againſt God himſelf, who commands us to obey his Church. Nor let any one preſume to arrogate the power of diſpenſing with himſelf. The authority, which enacts the law, is alone competent to mitigate it. And though many dare openly to violate this precept, it ſtill exiſts; nor does the number of them, that infringe, either annul or invalidate it

It

It is true, my Theophilus, that, by the orders of the Church, you are not obligated to faſt, till arrived at an age, when, the conſtitution being ſettled, no bad effects are to be feared from it. Such is the conſideration of that tender mother, who is ever ſolicitous for the welfare of her children. But, for this very reaſon, you ſhould be more exact in obeying her, when you can without riſk. And though, in rigor, nobody is obliged to faſt till the age of twenty one; it is, nevertheleſs, proper that young people ſhould habituate themſelves, in lighter things, to the practice of mortification; as, for inſtance, by retrenching ſomething from their meals, or by debarring themſelves little niceties, the loſs of which cannot prejudice their health. The like may be ſaid of thoſe, who, on account of infirmity or any other reaſonable impediment, are diſpenſed with from faſting. If not in a capacity to ſatisfy this duty in it's full extent, they ought to fulfil it in part at leaſt, and to unite themſelves in ſpirit with the intentions of the Church; endeavouring by other good works to compenſate their deficiencies in this particular regard.

How much, O God! have we degenerated from the pious zeal of our anceſtors! Comparatively with theirs, our inflictions are nothing. The moſt rigid auſterities were ſcarce ſufficient for their fervor: and we think too much of the ſlighteſt ſelf denials. Renew, O Lord! among us that ſpirit of penance, by which they were actuated. Our

crimes are not leſs heinous, nor our paſſions leſs ſtubborn. Why then ſhould we be more unwilling to do penance, than they were? Make us, at leaſt, diſcharge with punctuality that little, the Church demands of us. However eaſy faſting be rendered by the practice of the preſent times, ſtill thou art pleaſed to be contented with it: and that ours may receive it's full efficacy, we here unite it with thine. If the tenderneſs of my age exempts me from the obligation of faſting, let me take, at leaſt, ſome part in the general atonement; and let me ſupply for what is wanting by readineſs of mind, by a ſtrict guard upon my conduct, by aſſiduous prayer, and, above all, by a ſteady application and a perfect obedience.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould be regular in faſting, when of an age ſo to do; and, previouſly to that time, attentive to mortify ourſelves in things of ſmaller moment.

LECTURE LXI.

ON THE PRECEPT OF ABSTINENCE.

BY this regulation, the Church prohibits the uſe of fleſh meat, on the Fridays and Saturdays of each week in the year.

The

The reſpect, we owe to that authority, from which this precept is derived, and the collateral motives, on which it is grounded, concur alike in recommending it to our obſervance. It is the Church, that preſcribes it in the name of Jeſus Chriſt. And what are her views therein? To nouriſh in her children that ſpirit of mortification, which the Son of God, during life, never ceaſed to inculcate, and which is the ſummary abridgment of all his morality: to weaken the paſſions, by depreſſing the body: to give us an opportunity of cancelling our paſt offences, and of meriting his ſupport under future attacks. We are ſinners; and, as ſuch, obliged to do penance. We are ſick; and ought, of courſe, to recur to proper remedies. We all have ſins to expiate; and this is to be done by the practice of ſelf-denial, which appeaſes the divine juſtice. We all have paſſions to tame; and we can only ſubdue them, by retrenching their incentives.

The Church, who knows the need we have of this uſeful medicine, and, at the ſame time, perceives our ſtrong averſion to it, comes in kindly to our relief; and, that ſhe may engage us more effectually to acquieſce in her deſigns, makes a formal command of what is ſo much to our advantage. In this, ſhe acts like an affectionate mother, who, ſeeing the repugnance of her children to take down a bitter, but neceſſary, draught, interpoſes her authority, to reconcile them to it.

But, beſides this general view in the precept of abſtinence, the Church has particular motives alſo, which it imports you to be acquainted with. As ſhe has devoted the Sunday to the memory of the reſurrection of her ſpouſe, Jeſus Chriſt, ſo ſhe has conſecrated the Friday to the remembrance of his ſufferings.—Her ſpirit in this is the ſame, though her manner be different. For while the Sunday is a day of holy joy to her, becauſe the reſurrection of Chriſt is the principle of our juſtification, and the baſis of our hope; ſo ſhe conſiders the Friday as a day of penance; becauſe, on that day, the Son of God was crucified for our ſins, which we ſhould bewail and atone for, if we deſire to participate in the merits of his paſſion. For this reaſon, in the primitive ages, the Fridays were kept as faſting-days; as were likewiſe the Saturdays, in honor of our Saviour's burial, and as preparatory to the Sunday.—Afterwards, the faſt of theſe two days was reduced to a ſimple abſtinence; that is, a reſtriction from the uſe of meat; and which thence paſſed into a law, to which all are bound to ſubmit. Even children are not exempted, when of an age to comply with it. Inability alone can diſpenſe from it's obſervance.

Liſten not then, Theophilus, to ſuch unprincipled people, as may attempt to perſuade you that it concerns not God what nouriſhment we uſe.—Doubtleſs, the diſtinction of our food is indifferent to the Deity. But it is not indifferent to him whether

ther we admit or diſclaim the authority of his Church: it is not indifferent to him whether we keep alive or extinguiſh the ſpirit of penance, which he exacts of his followers. Imitate not them, who, without a reaſonable cauſe, or upon the moſt frivolous pretences, make free with this precept.—The more common the diſorder, the more ought we to lament it, as a grievous ſcandal; and to ſtrive to ground ourſelves more firmly in the ſenſe of our duty, to avoid being borne down by the torrent of example. The great degeneracy, in this reſpect, that diſgraces the times, cannot otherwiſe be conſidered than as an evident proof of the decreaſe of faith, and a fatal indifference in regard to ſalvation.

I am a ſinner, O God! and for ſuch thou doſt aſſure me the ſole remedy is penance. Were the mortifications, thou demandeſt, left to my own free option, I never ſhould have courage to preſcribe them to myſelf. But thy Church, in compaſſion, points out my duty to me. This is an additional motive, which ſtamps a freſh value on the performance of her injunctions, viz. the merit of obedience. Aſſociated alſo with the efforts of the body of the faithful, theſe ſelf-denials become more powerful to excite thy commiſeration: ſo that I ought to think myſelf happy to find, in this union, wherewith to ſupply the defect of my own endeavours. I will obey this order punctually; nor ſhall the example of thoſe, that infringe it, ever alter my

purpoſe. I will obſerve it myſelf, and impreſs it on them, who may hereafter depend on me. Such, O Lord! is my reſolution both in regard to this and to all the other mandates and ordinances of thy Church.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould grieve to ſee this precept ſo barefacedly violated.

LECTURE LXII.

ON SIN.

Son, take heed thou never conſent to ſin; nor tranſgreſs the commandments of the Lord, thy God. Toby iv. 6.

SIN is an offence againſt the law of God, whom we diſobey and inſult, whenever we commit what he prohibits to be done; or neglect to do that, which he enjoins us to perform.

Firſt, then, ſin is an impious attack upon the Sovereign Majeſty of God, the Lord of the univerſe, to whom every thing is ſubject, but the inſolent ſinner.—Secondly, it is a moſt foul ingratitude: for the God, whom we offend, is he, who gave us our being, which he ſtill preſerves; and who loads us with favors, at the very time we are diſobeying him. Perhaps, my dear Theophilus, you have not yet

yet comprehended the enormity of this evil: but theſe two reflections may help to give you an idea of it. And to perfect the impreſſion, conſider that it was for ſin your Redeemer was crucified. Behold his croſs; and ſee what he endured for the expiation of our crimes: this ſight cannot fail to ſtrike you with horror.—Laſtly, recall to your memory the dreadful puniſhments of ſin: all the evils, that deluge the world, all the miſeries of life, pain, ſickneſs and death are the conſequences of one only ſin, viz. the ſin of our parent, Adam. *By one man*, ſays the Apoſtle, *ſin entered into the world, in whom all have ſinned*. This is called *original ſin*, or the ſin of our origin, becauſe contracted from our birth; and it is the ſource of all the other ſins, that we commit by our own free will, which are denominated *actual ſins*.

The guilt of actual ſin may be incurred four different ways; by thought, by word, by deed and by omiſſion. The law of God forbids us not only to do what is wrong, but even to deſire it. It reſtrains not only the hand and tongue, but the mind alſo and the heart: for it is from the heart diſobedience originates. This is the root of ſin; words and actions are but it's produce.

Of actual ſin there are two kinds, *mortal* and *venial*. A ſin is *mortal*, when the matter of it is grievous, and it is committed with a full and deliberate conſent: and as ſuch, it is the greateſt of all poſſible evils. It bereaves us of ſanctifying grace,

which is the life of the ſoul; in like manner as the ſoul is the life of the body. It renders us the ſlaves of Satan, the enemies of God and objects of the divine hatred. What evil then can be put in competition with this? O my child! How great ſhould be your horror of it! How anxious your ſolicitude to ſhun it's approaches. There is nothing in life you ſhould not be willing to ſuffer, rather than knowingly to perpetrate a ſingle mortal ſin. Such were the ſentiments of the truly affectionate and pious mother of St. Lewis. "Son," ſhe ſaid to her child, "you know how much I love you: never-"theleſs, I declare that I had rather ſee you dead, "than witneſs you committing one only mortal "ſin." This early leſſon the prince never forgot; but made ſo good a uſe of it, that he ever after retained the moſt lively dread of ſin, and lived and died a pattern of ſanctity. I urge the like to you, Theophilus; fear ſin more than death; avoid it as you would a peſtilence. Shun even *venial* ſins; that is to ſay, ſuch ſins, as being leſs atrocious in their nature, do not deſtroy the grace of God, but wound and impair it; and which, though they expoſe us not to the rigors of eternal damnation, make us obnoxious to the ſeverity of temporal chaſtiſements. The loweſt degree of ſin is a very great evil, becauſe it offends the Supreme Being. And beſides, venial ſin, when made light of, leads inſenſibly to mortal ſin. *He*, ſays the Holy-Ghoſt, *that neglects*

ſmall

ſmall faults, ſhall fall into great ones; and thus finally periſh.

Inſpire me, O God, with that abhorrence of ſin, which it's malignity calls for. Teach me to dread and deteſt it more than all the miſeries of life; to regard it as the ſupreme evil, the only evil to be apprehended. Alas! How ſhall I, a worm of the earth, dare to inſult thy Sovereign Majeſty? Shall I be ſo ungrateful, as wilfully to offend the moſt tender of parents. Can any misfortune be ſo great, as to loſe thy favor and become an object of thy averſion? No, dear Lord! nothing ſhall have the power to ſeparate me from thee: rather let me die than be ſo wretchedly miſerable. Confirm me in this reſolution, which I now make in thy preſence. It is dictated by thyſelf: preſerve it, then, I entreat; and let neither the violence of my paſſions, nor the influence of bad example be able to ſubvert it.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould look upon ſin as the worſt of all evils.

LECTURE

LECTURE LXIII.

ON THE CAPITAL VICES: AND FIRST, ON PRIDE.

Son, never ſuffer Pride to reign in thy mind or in thy Words: for from it all perdition took it's beginning.— Toby iv. 14.

ALL the ſins, that mankind commit, are reducible to ſeven capital heads, the vitiated ſources of every ſpecies of iniquity. Theſe ſeven fountains of corruption are *Pride*, *Covetouſneſs*, *Luſt*, *Envy*, *Gluttony*, *Anger* and *Sloth*. It may be proper, Theophilus, to hold up to you the picture of each of theſe vices, and to delineate their effects; that you may be taught to conceive a juſt abhorrence of them, and learn to avoid them with the moſt ſedulous care. Let us begin by the firſt, viz. Pride, which is at once the moſt foul and the moſt dangerous of them all.

Suffer not Pride to reign in thy mind was among the chief admonitions, Toby gave to his ſon. From this black infection all our evils are derived. Pride then is an inordinate conceit and opinion of ourſelves; whereby we are led to prefer ourſelves before others, and to aſcribe every thing to our own merits and nothing to God. Hence *Vanity* and an immoderate deſire of praiſe. Admiration is the proud man's idol. In all his words and actions applauſe is what he aims at. He, is charmed with the groſſeſt flattery, and graſps at it with eagerneſs. If

refuſed

refuſed him, he is diſſatisfied, and thinks himſelf ill-uſed. Hence *Hypocriſy*. He conceals his real vices, and affects pretended virtues. His whole attention is bent on attracting the public eye, and ſhewing himſelf off. Hence *Contempt of his neighbour*. The high opinion he has of himſelf and of his own inherent merit makes him look down upon others from his ideal elevation: and he treats them, of courſe, with ſlight and with ſcorn. Hence, infine, *Diſobedience*. He refuſes to ſubmit to the commands of ſuperiors, and ſpurns at their advice.—Every ſhew of authority offends his lofty ſpirit, which indignantly bears the thought of ſubjection and control.

How odious a vice! Shun it therefore moſt ſtudiouſly. When aſſailed by it's inſinuations, beg of God to remove from you *the arrogance of haughty eyes*. Recollect the words of the Apoſtle: *What haſt thou, that thou haſt not received? And if thou haſt received it, why doſt thou glory in it, as if thou hadſt not received it?* Remember that Pride is offenſive both to God and to Man; and that the Deity takes a pleaſure in confounding the proud; whilſt he pours on the humble the profuſions of his grace.

Humility, is the virtue that is oppoſite to Pride, and the ground-work of all other virtues. The humble man is conſcious of his lowlineſs and miſery. He deſpiſes himſelf, and willingly ſubmits to be deſpiſed by others. In fact, if we reflect on what we are, how many ſubjects of humiliation do

we

we not find within ourſelves. Not to mention the infirmities of the body; of a body formed of the duſt of the earth, and deſtined quickly to return to it, let us view the ſtate of our ſouls. And what do we ſee therein? Ignorance in the underſtanding; corruption in the heart; a marked propenſity to evil; a ſtrange inconſtancy in good. Nothingneſs and ſin can alone be called our own. If we poſſeſs any thing eſtimable, it is the gift of the Almighty: the advantages of mind and body, the bleſſings of nature and grace, all equally flow from that fountain of perfection.

A perſon, convinced of all this, is little diſpoſed to be proud, to court praiſe, or to ſeek for honors. Averſe to oſtentation, he regards rather with an eye of pity the wretched trappings of wordly grandeur. Acquainted with his own defects, he is ſo far from contemning others, that he thinks them better than himſelf. If he perceives himſelf poſſeſſed of any laudable qualities, he attributes the whole honor of them to the bounty of God. But his attention is more employed on the conſideration of his faults; and for theſe he humbles himſelf profoundly in the preſence of the Deity. Theſe ſentiments of humility are highly pleaſing to the Almighty; who beholds with ſatisfaction the diſpoſitions of the humbled ſoul. The lower ſhe ſtoops, the higher does he raiſe her; and the more ſenſible ſhe is of her unworthineſs and dependance, the more does he exalt and enrich her

with

with his graces. Happy then they, that are truly humble of heart: for they are the favorites of heaven. But wo to the proud; for God will bring them to confuſion.

I know, my God! that Pride is the deepeſt wound of my ſoul. I was conceived in ſin. Nothingneſs is my extraction, and miſery my inheritance. This body, which I am ſo vain of, ſhall ere long become rottenneſs and the food of vile inſects. And yet, O inconſiderateneſs! I am bloated with ſelf-conceit. I think myſelf ſomething, and expect to be commended. To thee alone, O Lord! belong honor and praiſe. Shame and confuſion only are my portion. Whatever I have or am, I hold it of thy liberality. I exiſt even but by thy favor.—To thee alone is due the glory of every thing good, that belongs to me. Unhappy me, ſhould I preſume to rob thee of it. The advantages, thou haſt bleſſed me with, ſo far from elating me, are ſo many ſubjects of humiliation, from the bad uſe I make of them. How many others in the world would have employed them more profitably? Abandon me not, I pray thee, to the ſpirit of Pride. Give me the virtue of humility; that humility ſo precious, ſo eſtimable in thy ſight; and which ever finds acceptance at the throne of thy mercy.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould frequently petition for the virtue of humility.

LECTURE

LECTURE LXIV.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

Beware of all covetouſneſs. Luke xii. 15. *Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man.* Eccli. x. 9.

COVETOUSNESS is an inordinate attachment and adherence to riches.

To be poſſeſſed of riches is certainly no crime: but it is a great one to ſet our affections on them, to purſue them with eagerneſs, to place our happineſs in their acquiſition, and to employ unlawful means in procuring and collecting them. *The love of riches,* ſays St. Paul, *is the root of all evil.* He alſo ſtyles it *idolatry:* inaſmuch as it leads a man to make money the ſole object of his worſhip. An anxious ſolicitude for wealth produces *an indifference for ſalvation.* The mind, bent on heaping up earthly treaſures, is inſenſible to thoſe of heaven: and there is reaſon to apprehend that he ceaſes to be a Chriſtian, who is over intent on becoming rich.—Hence, the ſame Apoſtle informs us that many in his days loſt their faith, in conſequence of giving way to this inſatiable paſſion. It produces *a forgetfulneſs of God:* for the thought will be engroſſed with what the heart affects. It produces *an hardneſs towards the poor,* which no ſufferings of the diſtreſſed can mitigate or ſoften. It produces what is almoſt incredible, a *cruelty to oneſelf:* for the miſer becomes callous to his own wants: he prefers money

money to health and even to his very life; and refuſes himſelf neceſſaries, for fear of diminiſhing his ſtores. He accumulates riches, without making any uſe of them. He is indigent in the midſt of plenty; and in want of every thing amidſt profuſion. Finally, this vice produces *duplicity*: for, to come at the wealth of others, which it paſſionately covets, avarice will employ lies, diſhoneſty and fraud. *Nothing*, ſays the divine Spirit, *is more unjuſt than the man, who ſets his heart on money: he would* even, if neceſſary, *put his ſoul up to ſale.* When this paſſion takes the lead, honor and conſcience diſappear; knavery and violence fill their place. All ſorts of means, even the moſt criminal, are uſed to augment thoſe treaſures, on which the heart is fixed. And what is ſtill more deplorable, this miſerable paſſion gains ſtrength and vigor, in proportion with years.

Time and reflection abate and imperceptibly allay the noxious ferment of other evil diſpoſitions. But avarice grows upon a man, and receives additional force from the circumſtance of age. The nearer the miſer approaches to that fatal moment, when all muſt be relinquiſhed, the more he becomes attached to his pitiful idol. The more cloſely death preſſes on him, the fonder he is of his money, and the more neceſſary he conſiders it to preſerve him from the preſſure of chimerical diſtreſſes. *Thou fool*, Chriſt ſays to him, *this very night ſhall thy ſoul be called for; and whoſe ſhall thoſe riches*

be,

be, which thou haſt amaſſed with ſuch anxiety? They ſhall paſs into other hands: while a coffin and a ſhroud ſhall be thy ſole remaining portion of them.

Be then upon your guard, Theophilus, againſt ſo unreaſonable, ſo perverſe, ſo fatal a paſſion.—Taught by the mouth of Chriſt, ſeek not to lay up riches on earth, where ruſt conſumes, and the worms devour them, and where they are continually expoſed to the depredations of rapine. But ſtrive to prepare treaſures in heaven, where they will be fully ſecure both from the ravages of time and the machinations of villainy. Labor to acquire the virtue, that is oppoſed to avarice, and which conſiſts in a ſincere diſengagement from the things of the world, and a chriſtian indifference to either poverty or opulence. If you are poor, envy not the rich; nor wiſh to be rich yourſelf. Such periſhable things only ſerve to inflame, but will never ſatisfy your cravings. The virtuous man is happier with his ſlender mediocrity, than the wicked with all the glitter of his overflowing coffers. Riches, unfairly acquired, will be of little ſervice. But honeſty and juſtice will deliver from death. *Be not apprehenſive*, ſaid Toby to his ſon; *we are poor*, it is true; *but we ſhall be ſufficiently rich, if we fear God, avoid ſin and do what is right.* Having raiment and food, we ought to make ourſelves contented. If you are rich, be not attached to your wealth. Reflect that you can carry no part of it away with you; and

that

that the whole may become a prey to a rapacious heir, who, perhaps, waits impatiently for your death, to get poſſeſſion of your leavings. Employ it in alleviating the diſtreſſes of the poor; and, by this holy uſe of it, you will ſtore up riches in heaven, that never ſhall periſh.

What a madneſs, O God! to ſet our affections on riches tranſitory and periſhable; and to place our happineſs in heaping them up, without the heart to enjoy them! Great indeed muſt be our blindneſs, not to ſee how unreaſonable, how baſe this paſſion is. Alas, O Lord! I may be enſlaved to this vice myſelf, ſince others have been ſeduced by it, unleſs thou vouchſafeſt to ſupport me by thy grace. Grant me then this aid, I pray thee. If, in thy bounty, thou art pleaſed to beſtow riches on me, permit me not to love, nor yet to abuſe them, by rendering them ſubſervient to the calls of ſenſuality, or to the gratifications of idleneſs. Thou wouldeſt have them made ſerviceable to my ſalvation, by becoming in my hands the reſource of the needy. Make my practice accord with the views of thy providence, by relieving their wants. And, to wean my affections from all attachment to wealth, remind me often of futurity. Recall to my remembrance the aſſertions of thy word: that infallible word, by which thou haſt pronounced ſuch woes againſt the rich, that neglect to uſe properly what thy liberality has given them, and haſt promiſed ſo great rewards to thoſe, who, in compliance

with thy order, ſhall employ thy bounteous preſents in ſuccouring the indigent.

The Practical Inference

That we ſhould frequently give alms, though ever ſo ſmall, to keep ourſelves in the habit of a chriſtian beneficence.

LECTURE LXV.

ON LUST.

God hath not called us to uncleanneſs, but to ſanctification and holineſs. 1. Theſſal. iv. 7.

LUST is a criminal attachment to ſenſual pleaſure.

Nothing more unworthy of a human creature than this infamous vice: nothing more contrary to the vocation of a Chriſtian. *Let no ſort of impurity be ſo much as named among you,* ſays the Apoſtle. And indeed, to conceive the abhorrence, in which it deſerves to be held, we need but caſt an eye on it's diſmal effects. It cauſes a *hatred of God, an averſion to the duties of religion and a horror of death.* But, to a fuller conviction, let us enter into a more minute detail of the horrible conſequences of this ruinous paſſion.

A perſon

A perſon, addicted to this vice, is ſenſible that God holds him in diſlike and deteſtation. He regards him as a ſevere revenger of the crimes and exceſſes, into which his paſſion hurries him; and conſequently *abhors him*, who will hereafter chaſtiſe and puniſh them with rigor. *The duties of religion*, which breathes a ſpirit of purity, can never be allied to this beſtial vice. When once a man becomes a ſlave to it, he no longer has any reliſh for the exerciſes of piety. Prayer is irkſome, and quickly laid aſide: the word of God, that denounces perdition on ſuch, as give themſelves up to it, is no further attended to: the ſacraments, to approach which this vile propenſity muſt be abjured, are ſlighted and forſaken. The cries of conſcience thus ſtifled, a hardneſs of heart enſues; that is to ſay, a ſtate of ſtupor and inſenſibility, in which a perſon becomes callous to remorſe, and loſt to every conſideration, whether of duty, character or health. He forgets his beſt intereſts, and turns a deaf ear to the voice of admonition. Nothing does he think of but how to gratify his paſſion, let the coſt be what it may. The only concern, he feels, is leſt any thing ſhould diſturb him in the enjoyment of his pleaſures. Hence *a horror of death*, which to the libertine is moſt dreadful; becauſe it muſt ſeparate him from all he loves, and ſummon him to the bar of an injured and avenging Deity. Deteſt then a vice ſo fatal, and endeavour by the grace of God to acquire the oppoſite virtue: I mean the virtue of

chaſtity, which, while it renders us like the Angels, is ſo pleaſing to God, that, even in this life, he rewards it with the tokens of his favor. And as for the life to come, he promiſes everlaſting bliſs to them, that ſhall have preſerved unſullied the luſtre of their purity. *Bleſſed are the clean of heart, for they ſhall ſee God.*

And to protect a virtue, which is expoſed to ſo many dangers, Jeſus Chriſt recommends two principal means, namely, watchfulneſs and prayer. *Watch*, he ſays, *and pray, that you may not fall into temptation.* To watch, is to take precautions againſt whatever may injure the beauteous delicacy of this tender flower. We muſt therefore keep a guard upon our eyes, not to ſuffer them to dwell upon any dangerous object. We muſt keep a guard upon our ears, never to liſten to lewd diſcourſe. We muſt keep a guard upon our mind, to reject all bad thoughts, and every thing prejudicial to this lovely virtue. We muſt keep a guard upon our heart, to ſuppreſs the firſt riſings of licentious deſire. Particularly, Theophilus, be obſervant of the point laſt mentioned.—"As ſoon as an indecent image preſents itſelf to "your imagination, reject it with firmneſs," ſays St. Bernard, "and it will quickly diſappear. But "if you allow it time to fix, it will awaken a com-"placency, that will prove injurious to your inno-"cence. For this complacency will lead you to "conſent; conſent to action; action to habit; "habit to neceſſity, and neceſſity to death."—

Whereas,

Whereas, by a ſpeedy reſiſtance to the firſt impreſſions, this ſeries of calamities will be eaſily avoided.

Secondly, you muſt have recourſe to prayer, as ſoon as you perceive the firſt emotions of this paſſion. On ſuch occaſions, caſt yourſelf into the arms of God, ſaying to him with the Apoſtles, *Lord, ſave me, or I ſhall periſh.* Do not even wait, till you be tempted, to ſhelter yourſelf under his wings. Entreat him frequently and fervently either to deliver you from ſuch trials, or to enable you, by his grace, to reſiſt and overcome them. If you are faithful in ſo doing, be aſſured you will come off victor, and that you will even reap advantage from the temptation, to ſtrengthen you in virtue.

I am firmly reſolved, dear Lord! to employ the two means, which thou thyſelf art pleaſed to dictate, of maintaining my purity. I will place a watch over all my ſenſes, that the devil may find no entrance, through thoſe avenues, into my heart. I will turn away my mind from all evil ſuggeſtions, as ſoon as I perceive them. Pierce me, O God! with thy fear; and fruſtrate the attempts of my powerful enemy. Under all my temptations, I will addreſs myſelf to thee with a filial confidence. I will cry out to thee fervently, and from the bottom of my heart: *Have compaſſion on me, O Lord! O Father of mercies! have compaſſion on me:* and ſuffer nothing to tarniſh the luſtre of my chaſtity. Thou, O God! art the God of purity. Give me a fixed attachment to this amiable virtue, which aſſimu-

lates us, while on earth, to the candor of the Angels. Whatever ſtruggles it may coſt me, once more I determine to preſerve it inviolate, and to ſhun with ſolicitude every occaſion, that may endanger it. Why ſhould I not be able, aſſiſted by thy grace, to do what ſo many others have done, who have glorified thee in the body, by ſubduing their paſſions? Immaculate Virgin! who art the ſpecial protectrix of youth, obtain for me the ſtrength to adhere to my preſent purpoſe, which cannot fail to give thee pleaſure: and entreat thy beloved ſon, that I may ſtedfaſtly perſevere in it to the end of my life.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt watch and pray, both to avoid and to reſiſt the temptations of luſt.

LECTURE LXVI.

ON ENVY.

By the envy of the devil, death came into the world: and they, that follow him, are of his ſide. Wiſdom ii. 24, 25.

ENVY is an uneaſineſs of mind, and a repining vexation at another's deſert, becauſe it ſeems to leſſen our own.

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The envious man is galled at the merits of his neighbour. He cannot bear to be ſurpaſſed, or even equalled by any. He is hurt to find accompliſhments or virtues in others, which he either has not himſelf, or wiſhes to poſſeſs excluſively. Did the ſight of the advantages, that he obſerves in his neighbour, inſpire only the deſire of imitating and copying them, it would not then be envy: it would be that incentive to virtue, a generous emulation. But ſuch are not the diſpoſitions of the man infected with envy. He has leſs inclination to ſee himſelf poſſeſſed of thoſe eſtimable qualities, than to behold them torn off from the brow of his rivals. He conſiders the good, that befalls them, as a misfortune to himſelf; their ſucceſs as his loſs; their reputation as his cenſure. This unhappy paſſion, like a gnawing worm, conſumes his vitals; like a corroſive poiſon, exhauſts his ſpirits, and renders him the butcher of his own peace and happineſs.—How baſe a vice! How pernicious it's effects!

The firſt of theſe effects is *a ſatisfaction*, the envious man feels *at the misfortunes of his brethren*. Do thoſe, whom he envies, become objects of reprehenſion? He exults with joy, and triumphs at their fall. He finds a malignant pleaſure in ſeeing them humbled. While, at the ſame time, remark, Theophilus, that they, whom he thus rejoices over, have done him no ſort of harm. A perſon, actuated by revenge, attacks only his enemies, and them, from whom he has, or at leaſt thinks he has, received

ſome perſonal injury. But the envious man hates thoſe, whoſe virtues alone excite his ſpleen, and whoſe only crime is to be too deſerving and commendable. What a monſter! Is the human heart ſuſceptible of ſuch perverſeneſs and malignity!

The ſecond effect of envy is *detraction and calumny*. It exerts every nerve to ſtain the character of them, whoſe merit gives it uneaſineſs. As much as in it lays, it diminiſhes the good, that is ſaid of them: it puts a malicious conſtruction upon their actions, and repreſents as vices the moſt perfect of their virtues. Their piety in it's eyes is nothing but hypocriſy; their ſucceſs the effect of chance, and not the reſult of good conduct.

A third effect of this vice is *a wiſhful propenſity to injure it's neighbour*. From words it proceeds to actions. It croſſes his deſigns, and employs every kind of means to give him trouble and perplexity. It is conſtantly upon the move to prevent him from obtaining the end of his purſuits: or if, in ſpite of it's efforts, he is ſo lucky as to acquire it, to deprive him of their advantages. Even the moſt horrid atrocities and the fouleſt acts of violence are ſometimes the offspring of this execrable vice.

Envy was the cauſe of Cain's murdering his brother. He perceived that Abel's ſacrifices were more acceptable to the Deity, than thoſe offered by himſelf, becauſe preſented with a better heart and a more upright intention. Thereupon, he conceived a jealouſy, which was not to be appeaſed but

by

by the blood of his competitor. Envy inſpired the brethren of the guiltleſs Joſeph with the unnatural deſire of either cruelly making away with, or of ſelling him for a ſlave. Envy induced the Phariſees and leaders of the Jews to calumniate, to perſecute, and even to crucify the Son of God. The very judge, who pronounced ſentence on him, was convinced it was through Envy they delivered him into his hands. Thus the moſt enormous of all crimes was the effect of baleful Envy.

Be not then ſurpriſed, my child, that the Apoſtle St. Paul, enumerates this vice, among thoſe, which he ſtyles the works of the fleſh; thoſe deeds of darkneſs, that conduct to perdition. Keep your heart cloſe ſhut againſt it's deteſtable malignity. Do your utmoſt to procure the contrary virtue; that is to ſay, a chriſtian benevolence, which makes us ſympathize in the happineſs, as in the miſery of others, for God's ſake, and with a view to their ſalvation. The benevolence, I ſpeak of, is no other than charity. Whoever is actuated and guided by this virtue, takes a part in all the events that happen to his neighbour. He rejoices with them, that are glad; he condoles with the ſorrowful; he participates with all in the good or evil, they experience; and this with as much ſincerity, as if himſelf were involved in the iſſue of their concerns.

Preſerve me, O Lord! from Envy, a vice as odious in thy ſight, as deſtructive to them, that are guilty of it. I deteſt and abhor it. I will uſe my

beſt

beſt endeavours to ſuppreſs it from the beginning; and aſſume a diſpoſition more conformable to reaſon, and to the dictates of religion. I will partake in uniſon with my brethren of their good or ill fortune, and will ſhare with them alike in their joy and affliction. So far from being grieved at the good qualities, they poſſeſs, I will admit no other ſentiment than that of a laudable emulation, and will endeavour to copy whatever good I ſee in them. The ſight of their abilities ſhall ſtimulate me to improve the talents, with which thou haſt graciouſly favored me. The virtues, I behold them practiſe, ſhall animate me to eſteem and to practiſe them myſelf. If they profit more than I do, I will harbour no uneaſineſs; ſince application alone is what thou requireſt of me. I will even make it a matter of joy; in as much as by thus taking part in the ſucceſs of their exertions, I ſhall draw thy bleſſing on my own, and ſhall merit the aſſiſtance of thy favor and protection.

The Practical Inference.

That inſtead of envying, or grieving at, we ſhould imitate ſuch, as are diſtinguiſhed for their good qualities.

LECTURE

LECTURE LXVII.

ON GLUTTONY.

Be not greedy at thy meals. Sober drinking is health both to ſoul and body. Eccli. xxxi. 17. 37.

GLUTTONY is an intemperate uſe of meat and drink.

It is not forbidden to feel a pleaſure in eating and drinking. The wiſe providence of God has ſeaſoned with a certain reliſh the uſe of that food, which is neceſſary for the maintenance of our health and vigor. But to ſeek nothing but ſatisfaction in it is an abuſe of this bleſſing. We muſt eat and drink, ſolely with a view to preſerve life, and by no means to flatter the deſires of ſenſuality. The end, we ſhould therein propoſe, is to ſatisfy nature and to recruit our ſtrength; that we may be the better enabled to perform our duties and to ſerve Almighty God. Such is the direction of the Apoſtle: *Whether you eat, or whether you drink, do all for the glory of God.*

To follow this advice, we muſt not ſtudy at our meals to gratify the palate; but to correſpond with the views of providence, which, by the uſe of food and aliment, intends only the ſupport and preſervation of our exiſtence. To have no other aim therein, but that of a ſenſual ſatisfaction, is gluttony; it is making *a God of the belly*, according to the expreſſion of St. Paul. It is a vice unworthy

worthy of the dignity and character of a man; a vice, that ſtupifies the ſoul, dulls the underſtanding, impairs the health and ſhortens our days.—"Gluttony," ſays an ancient writer, "is more fa-"tal to mankind than the murderous ſteel."

Gluttony produces *intemperance:* becauſe it leads us to eat and drink beyond the bounds of ſobriety, and ſometimes even of reaſon. People of common decency of manners, therefore, are ſeldom guilty of it. Education and ſentiment are ſufficient to make us ſhun it, as infamous and brutal. It is alſo the parent of *ſenſuality*, which conſiſts in being dainty and nice in the choice of diſhes; or in being bent on the uſe of ſuch, as are prejudicial to health, merely becauſe they pleaſe and flatter the taſte; or, in fine, in greedily devouring our accuſtomary food. What an inverſion of the law of nature, to make that the occaſion of the ruin of our health, which was meant to ſupport it! How diſgraceful to a reaſonable being, to become the ſlave of ſenſuality, which even the brute beaſt recoils at! This vice alſo produces *a contempt of the orders and regulations of the Church.* A perſon, who abandons himſelf to gluttony, makes little account of the faſts and the days of abſtinence, ſhe enjoins. He knows not the meaning of mortification and ſelf-denial.—The law, which preſcribes certain ſtated privations, appears to him a vexatious, and intolerable yoke.—He ſeeks every pretence to get exempted from it; and perſuades himſelf to violate not only the pre-

cept

cept of faſting, but to uſe without ſcruple, prohibited food.

Finally, Gluttony produces *diſſention*, with all it's appending horrors. From the boſom of intemperance ſpring diſputes, broils, quarrels and the extravagancies of frantic paſſion. Hear how the Spirit of God delivers himſelf on this ſubject, by the pen of the enlightened Solomon: *Who hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falleth into pits? Who hath wounds without cauſe? Surely they, that paſs their time in wine, and ſtudy to drink off their cups.*

Never then, Theophilus, *be greedy at your meals*, nor give into the exceſſes of rioting and drunkenneſs. Conceive a lively horror of a vice ſo ſcandalous, ſo unbecoming a man and much more a Chriſtian. At all your meals, obſerve an uniform ſobriety; that virtue, which regulates our eating and drinking, according to the rules of neceſſity; that virtue, which invigorates the body, and adds length to the years of life. Take care not to exceed the limits of the wants and calls of nature. A Chriſtian conſiders eating as a neceſſary medicine. He liſtens neither to greedineſs nor ſenſuality. He avoids the appearance of daintineſs, and ſeeks not ſuch diſhes, as may flatter his ſenſes. In a word, he ſtrives to imitate the conduct and the example of Chriſt, who was pleaſed to ſubmit to this humiliating act, to ſerve us as a model. He has always before his eyes that admonition of his Saviour: *Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with ſurfeiting.*

feiting. And in order to remind himſelf of the rules of moderation, as well as to merit help to abide by their dictates, he is careful to ſay grace, both before and after meals. Never omit this practice: for it is not only reſpectable, and to be commended in itſelf, but an effectual method alſo to attract the divine bleſſing. God knows the temptations, that attend even the ſatisfying the demands of our nature; and he will be ready to protect us under them, if we apply to him by prayer.

O God! to thy paternal bounty are we indebted for the many good things, we have, for the ſupply of our neceſſities. Theſe thou art pleaſed to beſtow, only for the preſervation of life and the renewal of our ſtrength. If thou doſt annex pleaſure to the uſe of our food, it is an effect of thy kindneſs: it is that we may feel no repugnance to what neceſſity demands. But to uſe it ſolely for ſatisfaction, or wilfully to paſs the bounds of this urgent neceſſity, is to turn thy favors againſt thyſelf; it is to employ in offending thee what ſhould be a powerful incentive to ſtimulate our gratitude.—Never, O Lord! ſuffer me to be guilty of ſuch perverſity. Teach me to uſe, as becomes a Chriſtian, the gifts of thy providence; never to run into any exceſs; never to ſeek to pleaſe the palate; but only to ſatisfy my wants. That I may deſerve this grace at thy hands, I will ſanctify my meals by prayer; and although this pious cuſtom be, now a days, too much neglected, I will punctually obſerve it.

it. I will never bluſh at being a Chriſtian, nor be deterred by bad example.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould make it our conſtant rule to ſay grace both before and after meals.

LECTURE LXVIII.

ON ANGER.

Be not quickly angry; for Anger reſteth in the boſom of a fool. Eccleſ. vii. 10.

THERE is a holy Anger, the effect of zeal, which makes us reprimand with ſeverity, in caſes of duty and conſcience, when mildneſs proves ineffectual. Of this nature is the Anger of a parent or ſuperior, at the ſight of diſorders, which he is obliged to put a ſtop to. With this ſort of Anger our Redeemer himſelf was influenced, when he drove them from the temple, that profaned it's awful ſanctity.

But the Anger, which is criminal, is of a very different deſcription. It is an impetuous emotion, which urges us to repel with violence whatever is diſpleaſing. It is vicious in it's principle. For it is the effect of ſome paſſion, that ſways the heart, and which meets with oppoſition. The proud man

ſwells

ſwells with indignation at whatever hurts his vanity: the miſer is irritated, when his golden projects are croſſed: the voluptuary becomes incenſed, if his pleaſures are controlled. This kind of Anger is neither according to God, nor ſubordinate to reaſon. It diſquiets the ſoul; and the agitation, it occaſions, diſcovers itſelf in the countenance and in all the geſtures of the body: the eyes flaſh with fire; the voice faulters; the whole frame is convulſed. A perſon in this ſtate, while he forgets himſelf, loſes ſight of all regard and conſideration for others. Hence the *invectives*, he pours on them, that are the objects of his wrath: the venom flows in copious ſtreams from his pale and quivering lips: neither the fouleſt cenſures, nor the groſſeſt calumnies are ſpared; nor is any ſtone left unturned to vilify and debaſe them. Hence *imprecations againſt himſelf*, and ſometimes the moſt ſhocking and horrible *blaſphemies*, the raſh effuſions of his irritated phrenzy. Nothing is then inviolable, nothing ſacred to his impious tongue. The moſt flagrant acts of *outrage* next enſue; when no cruelty is too great for his vengeance, no brutality for his rage. O God! can a perſon in this condition deſerve to be called a Chriſtian? No: the name of man even is too good for him, whom fierce Anger thus transforms into a ſavage and ferocious beaſt.

Such are the dire effects, Theophilus, of this terrible paſſion. Accuſtom yourſelf by times to maſter and ſubdue it. As ſoon as you perceive the

the firſt impreſſions of it riſing, ſtifle them in ſilence: ſpeak not, while the heat continues; for all you then might ſay, would only tend to increaſe the flame. Exerciſe the *patience and meekneſs* of a Chriſtian. Theſe virtues will teach you to bear, for God's ſake, the contradictions and trials, that you may occaſionally meet with. They will check the impetuous ſallies of Anger, and prevent you from ſhewing any ſymptoms of diſquietude, or letting a word of complaint eſcape your troubled lips. They will give you a modeſt carriage towards all; and a circumſpection, tempered with mildneſs, towards thoſe in particular, whoſe harſhneſs or impetuoſity may require to be managed.

Theſe are the virtues, that St. Paul recommends in the following words: *Brethren, I conjure you to walk in a manner worthy of your vocation, with all humility and meekneſs, with forbearance and patience; ſupporting one another in charity.* And to engage us to the practice of theſe amiable virtues, he recalls to our memory the croſs of Jeſus Chriſt. He ſets him before our eyes, who ſuffered ſo much from the malice of ſinners. He repreſents the patience, which he bore tenderly with us, when yet his enemies by ſin; and how dearly he loved us, while deſerving only of his hatred. Encourage yourſelf, therefore, by the example of Chriſt, to put up with every thing; and ſtrive to come as near to this heavenly model, as human weakneſs will permit. You have no other means

to ſecure your ſalvation, than by rendering yourſelf conformable to his ſacred original. Attend then to what he ſays to you: *Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart*; while he preſſingly exhorts you to an imitation of his virtues: *I have ſet you an example, that you* may walk in my ſteps, and *do as I have done.*

How often, O God! do I abandon myſelf to impatience and choler. The ſlighteſt contradiction or affront provokes me. By ſo frequently giving way to Anger, I expoſe myſelf to contract a habit of this dangerous paſſion. I feel the neceſſity of curbing my temper, and of forming myſelf betimes to patience and meekneſs. I have my defects, no leſs than other people; and as I wiſh them to bear with mine, it is but juſt I ſhould bear with theirs. Can I have ſo much repugnance to comply with a mandate, which thou haſt ſo ſtrongly inculcated both by thy word and example? Can I be ſo hurt by a trifling injury, when I behold thee ſuffering the blackeſt calumnies, the moſt outrageous inſults, with an invincible patience, and enduring the tortures of the croſs, without complaint or reſentment. Jeſus, who art the God of peace! Jeſus, who art meek and humble of heart, and who commandeſt me to copy thy endearing ſweetneſs! aſſiſt me in reſtraining my natural impetuoſity. Never ſuffer me to wiſh to return evil for evil; but enable me, after thy example, to obſerve a profound ſilence under the moſt galling affronts. Thou pronounceſt

nounceſt the meek happy, and calleſt them the children of God, that love and keep peace. Give me then, O Lord, this pacific diſpoſition, which thou requireſt as the badge and the livery of thy ſervants.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt ſtrive to live in peace with all, by overlooking their defects.

LECTURE LXIX.

ON SLOTH.

An idle ſoul ſhall ſuffer hunger. Prov. xix. 15. *Idleneſs hath taught much evil.* Eccli. xxiii. 29.

SLOTH is a ſluggiſh diſpoſition; a voluntary diſlike and averſion to labor; which occaſions us to neglect even the moſt eſſential obligations, rather than force or exert ourſelves in taking pains to diſcharge them.

There is no kind of ſin, no ſort of diſorder, to which ſloth does not lead: becauſe it reduces the ſoul to a ſtate of ſtupidity and heavineſs, that indiſpoſes it to reſiſt it's bad inclinations. It is commonly ſtyled the mother of all vices: but thoſe, that immediately ſpring from it, are

Firſt, *idleneſs and loſs of time.* The ſluggard ſpends his days, his months and his years either on the lap of drowſy inactivity, or in the vapid purſuit of frivolous amuſements. His performance of religious duties is defective and criminal. Prayer is either entirely neglected, or tepidly ſlurred over: the ſacraments are abandoned, or irreverently received, for want of preparation. Nor does he acquit himſelf better of the obligations of his ſtate of life. A youth, for inſtance, reaps no advantage from the benefit of his ſtudies. He performs nothing that is preſcribed him; or he performs it imperfectly, without application or attention.—Hence his underſtanding remains uncultivated, his memory unpractiſed; and he quits the theatre of his education almoſt as crude, as he entered it.—And what is the reſult of this loſs of his youthful hours? He is afterwards employed in ſome line of buſineſs; a buſineſs, that demands a certain degree of information: but he is unequal to the taſk, and, of courſe, executes it ill; his ignorance is viſible, his incapacity manifeſt; till, at length, he becomes an object of public deriſion. How much does he then regret his paſt idleneſs and perverſity! But in vain: his regret comes too late; the loſs is irreparable.

The ſecond vice, that ſloth gives birth to, is a timid *puſillanimity.* The idle man has not the courage nor the reſolution to undertake the minuteſt concern: the ſmalleſt obſtacle diſheartens him: he thinks

thinks every thing impoſſible, becauſe he will not beſtir himſelf. *Woe*, ſays the ſacred text, *to the puſillanimous of heart.*—It alſo produces *inconſtancy.*—If ever he conceives any deſires of amendment, theſe deſires are but faint, and of very ſhort duration. He quickly grows tired, and wraps himſelf up again in his accuſtomary indolence. *The ſluggard*, ſays the Wiſe-man, *is the victim of his own inſtability: he wills and he wills not: to day he wiſhes one thing, to morrow another: he likes what is right to day, but to morrow he will think differently.* Hence that *lukewarmneſs*, which accompanies him in all his undertakings; that is to ſay, a liſtleſſneſs of mind and languor of ſpirits, that leave him no reliſh nor inclination for any thing. Hence, in fine, *inſenſibility*, which makes him deaf to the remonſtrances and exhortations of thoſe, that would rouſe him from his ſtupor. Nothing can move, nothing affect him. The ſting of reproach and the ſpur of good example are alike loſt upon him.

What a ſink of iniquity is the ſoul of the ſlothful! the Holy-Ghoſt compares it to a neglected piece of ground. *I paſſed*, ſays the ſacred penman, *by the field of the ſluggard, and it was full of weeds: thorns and briers covered it's ſurface, and it's fence was fallen down.* Shun then, my dear Theophilus, ſhun a vice ſo noxious. Hear the words which God addreſſes to you, by the oracle of the book of Proverbs: *Go to the ant, O Sluggard! conſider her ways, and learn wiſdom.* For, though ſhe hath no guide,

nor inſtructor, *ſhe maketh her proviſion in the ſummer, and gathereth her food in the harveſt. How long wilt thou ſleep? When wilt thou riſe? If thou wilt continue to ſlumber, want ſhall come upon thee, and poverty, as a man armed.* Remember well this leſſon, and never, I pray, loſe ſight of it. Entreat God to grant you the virtue oppoſite to ſloth; that is to ſay, a zealous activity, which will make you take a pleaſure in your duties, and be ever ready to diſcharge them, with a view to ſerve him and to effect your ſalvation. Be not dejected at difficulties. Have but courage; and the Almighty, by his unction, will render eaſy and pleaſant what at firſt ſeemed hard and painful. For as from him is derived the obligation of working, ſo from him muſt come the aid to fulfil his command. And for the reſt, be aſſured that the irkſomeneſs attending inactivity and ſloth is a thouſand times more intolerable than the moſt laborious employment.

O God! Thou haſt commanded man to labor, and he deviates from the order, which thou haſt eſtabliſhed on earth, when he yields to ſloth, and ſpends his time either in ſluggiſh inaction or in idle diverſions. This time thou alloweſt him, that he may employ it in ſomething ſerviceable; and thou wilt demand of him an account of the uſe, he ſhall have made of it. *The unprofitable ſervant* ſhall be *caſt into outward darkneſs*, where *there ſhall be* eternal *weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* Permit me not, dear Lord! to be involved in this frightful ſentence.

ſentence. Grant me the grace of properly employing the firſt years of my life. I offer to thee, from this moment, all my occupations and ſtudies, to which I will apply myſelf diligently, in order to pleaſe thee. Preſerve me from idleneſs, from diſguſt and from levity. Whenever I perceive my mind to be wandering from the object, that ought to engage it, I will inſtantly recall it, and renew my attention. Proſper, O God! my endeavours, and facilitate this application, by inſpiring me with a reliſh for the duties enjoined me. For it is thou, that imparteſt wiſdom and underſtanding to the young.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould at all times be ſolicitous to keep ourſelves employed.

END of the SECOND PART.

PART III.

THE

RESOURCES OF RELIGION.

LECTURE LXX.

ON THE NECESSITY OF GRACE, AND THE MEANS OF OBTAINING IT.

Every beſt gift, and every perfect grace, is from above; coming down from the Father of lights. James i. 17.

THE grace of God is the ſupport of our virtue, and the ſource of all our good. It is of the utmoſt neceſſity, in order to keep the divine commandments, and to fulfil the will of heaven. This our redeemer himſelf tells us: *Without me you can do nothing:* and after him St. Paul: *Of ourſelves, as of ourſelves, we cannot have one good thought; it is God alone, that favors us with them.* Grace therefore, is a ſupernatural help, which the Almighty gives us, out of his gratuitous mercy, and in conſideration of the merits of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

Of

Of grace there are two kinds: firſt, *habitual* or *ſanctifying* grace, which cleanſes and juſtifies us: that is to ſay, by the means of which we paſs from a ſtate of ſin to a ſtate of righteouſneſs; and by which we are made the children of God, acceptable in his ſight, and heirs to his kingdom.—Secondly, *actual* grace, which conſiſts in the inſpiration of a good thought, that enlightens the underſtanding; and in the influence of a pious motion, that decides and helps the will to do what is right.

Original ſin caſt a gloom of obſcurity over the underſtanding of man, and ſpread corruption in his heart. In conſequence of this, we are all born in ignorance, and with a ſtrong diſpoſition and propenſity to evil. From theſe two ſources flow all our crimes. We ſin, either becauſe we are ignorant of our duty; or becauſe, although we are acquainted with it, we prefer following our inclinations to the light, that is within us. And for ever ſhould we continue enſlaved to ſin, and incapable of performing any thing meritorious or good, did not God open the eyes of our clouded underſtanding, and give the heart a bent to the exerciſe of virtue. Grace heals theſe two wounds, the effects of ſin upon the ſoul. It diſcovers to us what we ſhould do: it inſpires the deſire, and enables us to execute it.—What would become of man, attacked on every ſide, both interiorly and exteriorly, did not God ſuſtain his weakneſs? For to his natural tendency to evil, we muſt add the temptations, he experi-

ences

ences from the devil and from creatures. What dangers from every quarter! The world diſplays it's charms and attractions to allure him. The devil is unremitting, in preſenting to his ſenſes the moſt flattering objects; and in working, by every artifice, on his too ſuſceptible imagination. No, never could he reſiſt ſuch a combination of foes, did the Almighty ceaſe for a moment to protect and ſupport him. For this reaſon, the Apoſtle, after lamenting the contradictions, that he finds within himſelf, thus exclaims: *Unhappy man, that I am! Who will emancipate me from this body of death, but the grace of God, through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt?* For the ſame reaſon, in reciting the Lord's prayer, we daily beg of God, that *his name be hallowed*; that his *will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*; that he would *not abandon us to temptation*; but would *deliver us from evil*. Wherefore, according to the doctrine of our Saviour, we can neither glorify the name of God, nor accompliſh his will, nor reſiſt temptation, nor eſcape the ſnares of ſurrounding enemies, but by the aid of God himſelf: whilſt, on the other hand, by the help of his grace, we become ſupereminently powerful. *I can do every thing*, St. Paul ſays, *in him, who ſtrengthens and ſuſtains me.*

But this aſſiſtance, Theophilus, is by no means due to us: if it were, it would no longer be grace. We have no ſort of claim to it. It is a gift of the Deity, out of his infinite mercy, and in virtue of the merits of his Son, Chriſt Jeſus. He refuſes it to no one;

one; and it is entirely our own fault, if it does not operate our ſalvation. It is not grace that is wanting to us; but we to grace. This all-powerful ſupport God has annexed to the *ſacraments*, when properly received. He has promiſed it to *prayer*, when duly performed. We have therefore two infallible means of obtaining this treaſure; which means I here denominate *the reſources of religion.*

Firſt then, *ſanctifying* grace is conveyed to our ſouls, through the channels of the ſacraments of baptiſm and penance, inſtituted by our Lord, for this very intent; and which, in conſequence of this inſtitution, are become the neceſſary vehicles of our righteouſneſs and juſtice. Secondly, the Deity has promiſed to hear us, whenever we make application to him by prayer; when we implore his aſſiſtance; when we ſolicit his mercy, in the name of his Son, who has loved us to that degree, as to ſacrifice his life for us. It is in your power then, my child, to draw down the grace of God, and by the efficacy of it's help to fulfil his commandments. For the Almighty commands not impoſſibilities. He orders us to do what we can; and to aſk of him what we cannot do, and he aſſiſts us to accompliſh it. His commands are not oppreſſive: for his *Yoke is ſweet, and his burthen is light.* The children of God love his Son, Jeſus Chriſt; and they, that love him, are obſervant of his word, which they certainly may keep, if aided by grace. And thus, living *temperately*, *juſtly* and *godly* they may, through their Redeemer,

deemer, profit by that grace, into which they are introduced by the merits of his paſſion. For God never forſakes thoſe, whom he once has juſtified, unleſs they firſt forſake him. He ceaſes not to protect them, while they continue faithful in their obedience.

Yes O Lord! it would be impoſſible to lead the life of a chriſtian, and to ſave my ſoul, without the indiſpenſable help of thy ſovereign grace. The fund of depravity, that is within me, and the multiplied attacks of my external enemies unite to convince me of the certainty of this truth. But this ſupport thou doſt offer to me; and it depends ſolely on myſelf to have and to improve it. If I am weak, it is my own fault: it is becauſe I have neglected to ſue for thy grace; becauſe I have omitted to make advantage of it, and becauſe, to my ſorrow, I have even rejected it. When I was ſo unhappy as to forfeit my ſpiritual life by ſin, might I not have recovered my loſs, by having recourſe to that ſacrament, which thou haſt inſtituted for this purpoſe? When aſſailed by temptations, may I not lift up my hands to thee and implore thy aſſiſtance? Thou haſt promiſed to help them, that ſhall invoke thee by prayer. Why have I not uſed the arms, thou haſt ſo liberally ſupplied me with; and which, with confidence in thee, would have rendered me victorious? Forget my paſt reſiſtance to the calls of thy mercy. Make my mind more attentive to thy future inſpirations, and my heart

heart more pliant to thy ſalutary impreſſions.—Grant that, by my fidelity in correſponding with thy grace, I may courageouſly embrace the cauſe of virtue, and reſolutely adhere to it till the hour of my death.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould attend to the pious thoughts, which God is pleaſed to ſuggeſt to us.

LECTURE LXXI.

ON THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

You ſhall draw waters in joy from the fountains of the Saviour. Iſaias xii. 3.

CHRIST has inſtituted the ſacraments, as the ordinary channels, through which he communicates that grace, which conducts to eternal bliſs. He has eſtabliſhed certain outward and viſible ſigns, to which he has affixed the ſupereminent gifts of juſtification and merit. By virtue of the divine power, annexed to their operation, theſe ſigns are not only ſignificant of what they impart; but they are alſo effective; producing, nouriſhing and augmenting our ſpiritual life. They are called *Sacraments*, or *Sacred ſigns*. They are *ſigns*, becauſe they denote what we do not ſee; and they are *ſa-*

ledge

cred ſigns, becauſe they hold out to us the knowledge of a celeſtial grace, which they communicate to us. In the ſacraments then two things are to be attended to: the one what we ſee, and therefore believe; the other what we believe, although we ſee it not. What we ſee are the external geſtures or actions of the miniſter: for example, in baptiſm, we ſee the water poured upon the infant's head, and we hear the awful words, that are pronounced at the ſame moment. What we do not ſee is the internal operation, by which God inviſibly cleanſes the ſoul, and purifies it from ſin. In thus annexing his grace to things material and ſenſible, Chriſt has benevolently accommodated himſelf to the condition of our nature. Had we been pure ſpirits, the favors of the Deity would have been equally ſpiritual. But ſince the immaterial ſoul is conjoined to a material body, he imparts his grace, which is entirely ſpiritual, through the medium of viſible and corporeal ſymbols.

The catholic Church, on the evidence of the Scripture and the authority of tradition has ever acknowledged and diſtributed ſeven ſacraments: viz: *Baptiſm, Confirmation, Penance, the Euchariſt, Extreme-unction, Holy-order and Matrimony.* This ſmall number of ſacraments ſuffices abundantly for all the wants of the ſoul: which wants, in the order of grace, as thoſe of the body, in the order of nature, are reducible to ſeven. In the latter, we muſt be born; we muſt grow and be fed; when indiſpoſed,

indiſpoſed, we muſt have remedies to reſtore our health; and even when cured, further helps to eradicate the diſeaſe, and completely to reeſtabliſh us. Moreover, ſociety requires ſuperiors and magiſtrates to govern it; and laſtly, as it's members die off, there muſt be the means to continue and keep up a ſucceſſion of them. The demands, in the order of grace, which relate to the ſoul, are exactly ſimilar; and our Saviour has provided for them, by the inſtitution of his ſacraments. Baptiſm confers on us a new birth and exiſtence. Confirmation makes us grow, and ſtrengthens our ſpiritual life.—Penance heals the diſorders and infirmities of the ſoul. The Euchariſt is it's ſuſtenance. Extreme-unction does away the relicts of that weakneſs, which ſin is apt to leave behind it. Holy-order ſupplies the Church with miniſters, and Matrimony with children; the one to direct, the other to renew her, and to perpetuate her duration, till the end of time.

The purport of theſe ſacraments is to effect our ſanctification. To this they all tend. But there is a difference in their operations, which it is requiſite to note. Firſt, Baptiſm and Penance, as they find us in a ſtate of death, occaſioned by ſin, reinſtate us in the life of grace: while the other ſacraments only encreaſe that ſpiritual life, which we enjoyed on receiving them. Secondly, three of them, viz. Bptiſm, Confirmation, and Holy-order, beſides ſanctifying the ſoul, imprint on it a ſpiritual mark, that

conſecrates

conſecrates it to the Deity, in a diſtinct and ſpecial manner. Whoever approaches any one of theſe ſacraments without ſuitable diſpoſitions, though he receive not ſanctifying grace, yet he receives this impreſſion. Moreover, although the grace, thereby acquired, may be loſt by ſin, the divine character or impreſſion, with which they ſtamp us, is not to be eraſed. For which reaſon, theſe three ſacraments cannot be reiterated; by which I mean that they cannot be received more than once by the ſame perſon.

Obſerve alſo, Theophilus, that, beſides the actions and words, eſſential to each ſacrament, and which are otherwiſe called their *matter and form*, the Church has ſuperadded a variety of ceremonies, for the further inſtruction and edification of the faithful. Although theſe ceremonies be not abſolutely neceſſary for the effect of the ſacraments, they are not the leſs reſpectable, on account of their antiquity. The greateſt part of them were introduced by the Apoſtles themſelves: and they ſerve to impreſs us with a ſtronger idea of the virtue of theſe ſacred ſymbols; and ſenſibly inform us of the diſpoſitions we ought to bring to them, of the effects they produce, and of the obligations they entail upon us.

I return thee thanks, O my God! for having favored thy Church with ſuch inexhauſtible ſources of heavenly bleſſings. By affording me ſo many means and helps to ſalvation, thou ſheweſt convin-

cingly that thou wiſheſt to ſave me: and ſhall I be ſo blind to my own true welfare, as ſtupidly to neglect and forego ſuch advantages? No, dear Lord, I will not. On the contrary, I will earneſtly ſtrive to turn them to the beſt account. My firſt deſire ſhall be to correſpond with thy views. I will frequent theſe divine ſources, to draw from them that water, which cleanſes the ſoul from all it's defilements. I will there ſeek light amidſt my darkneſs, ſtrength amidſt my frailties and conſolation amidſt my ſufferings. But to be benefited by them, it is neceſſary that I approach them with proper diſpoſitions. For *Holy things are for the holy.* Grant therefore, I now entreat, that I may never preſume to preſent myſelf at the diſtribution of thy ſacred treaſures, but with thoſe ſentiments of reſpect, veneration and piety, which thou demandeſt of all, that wiſh to partake of them.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould be thankful to God, for having furniſhed us with ſo many means and aids to ſalvation; and firmly reſolve to take advantage of their aſſiſtance.

LECTURE

LECTURE LXXII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

God hath ſaved us by the laver of regeneration--that, being juſtified by his grace, we may be heirs to eternal life. Tim. iii. 5.

BAPTISM is the firſt of the ſacraments, and that, which gives us a right to participate in the others.

This ſacrament our Saviour inſtituted, when he ſaid to his Apoſtles: *Go, and teach all nations; baptiſing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy-Ghoſt. He, that ſhall believe, and be baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved.* Jeſus Chriſt, therefore, eſtabliſhed baptiſm for the ſalvation of man; to deliver him from ſin, and from that everlaſting death, which is the puniſhment of ſin; and to render him, by a new birth, the child of God and a member of his Church.

Baptiſm, Theophilus, obliterates in children original ſin; and in adults it alſo effaces whatever actual ſins, they may have committed, ſince their coming to the uſe of reaſon. It remits, moreover, all the puniſhments due to thoſe ſins: for which reaſon, the Church never did enjoin any ſatisfaction, or penance to the newly baptiſed. But it does not take away the effects of original ſin; viz. ignorance and concupiſcence, the miſeries of life and the horrors of death. Theſe effects God is

pleaſed to leave, after the ſin itſelf is forgiven, for the trial of our virtue, by the combats, we have to ſuſtain, in order to practiſe it. If baptiſm freed us from ignorance and from all propenſity to evil, we ſhould do what is right without any trouble, and by an inſtinct, as it were, of nature: and where would be the merit of ſuch actions, did they coſt us nothing? But theſe effects of ſin, that ſtill remain, oblige us to aſſiduous and unremitted exertions, to conquer the difficulties, we unhappily experience in the performance of our duty.

Baptiſm regenerates us in Chriſt, and imparts to us a new and ſpiritual life, according to thoſe words of our Saviour: *Unleſs a man be born again of water and the Holy-Ghoſt, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This life of grace, which baptiſm communicates, conſiſts in an union of the ſoul with God. For God is the life of the ſoul, as the ſoul is the life of the body. The body is alive, while conjoined to the ſoul: but, whenever the ſoul is ſeparated from it, it becomes dead, without motion, or ſenſe. In like manner, the ſoul is alive, as long as it is united to the Deity, by faith, hope and charity: but when divided from him by ſin, it is abſolutely dead, and incapable of meriting a future ſtate of happineſs.

Finally, baptiſm imprints upon the ſoul a character or ſpiritual mark, which conſecrates to God, and diſtinguiſhes from others all ſuch, as are baptiſed. In conſequence of this ſacred ſtamp, baptiſm

tiſm can be received only once. For what once has been devoted to the ſervice of the Deity, belongs to him for ever by an inalienable right.

Formerly, in the adminiſtration of this ſacrament, the perſon baptiſed was plunged into water; and to this immerſion St. Paul alludes, when he ſays: *We are buried with Chriſt in baptiſm, to die to ſin; to the end that, as he is riſen from the dead, we alſo may walk in the newneſs of life:* that is to ſay, that, by the waters of baptiſm, we are purified from ſin, as Chriſt, by his death, was diveſted of our infirmities: and that we come out of the ſacred laver, endued with a new life, as Chriſt, at his reſurrection, came forth from his monument, adorned with immortality. Now a days, baptiſm is adminiſtered by pouring water on the perſon's head, and pronouncing at the ſame time thoſe operative words: *I baptiſe thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy-Ghoſt.* The union of theſe two parts, the action and the words, is eſſential to this ſacrament. It is the exterior ſign, which informs us that the ſoul is cleanſed from ſin, while the body is purified by the act of ablution. This rite, by virtue of the inſtitution of our Redeemer, Jeſus Chriſt, applies to man the merits of this adorable Saviour; in order to give him a new life, which makes him a child of God, a member of Chriſt and the temple of the Holy-Ghoſt; and which confers on him a right to the kingdom of heaven, as the heir of the Almighty and the coheir of his Son. So eſſential is

baptiſm for the ſalvation of mankind, that even infants muſt be waſhed in it's purifying waters.—Martyrdom, however, that is to ſay, ſuffering death for the cauſe of Chriſt, would ſupply the defect of it; and in adults, the deſire even would be ſufficient, were they under an abſolute impoſſibility of being actually baptiſed.

At the time, O my God! when thou didſt admit me to thy font, I was incapable of underſtanding the magnitude of this bleſſing. Thou didſt open to me the treaſures of thy infinite mercy, before I was able to deſire, or to have a knowledge of them. At preſent, I am convinced of the value of thy gift, and moſt humbly thank thee for it. I was conceived in ſin; and thou haſt freed me from it by baptiſm. I was born a ſlave of the devil; and thou haſt adopted me for thy child. I received from my parents but a periſhable life; and thou haſt given me a life to be perpetuated for ever. Thou haſt not done ſo much, O Lord! for thouſands of others, who are ignorant of thee. It has been my happineſs to be born of chriſtian parents and in the boſom of thy Church. And what had I done to merit this preference? To thy mercy alone I ſtand indebted for it. A favor ſo ſignal, and, at the ſame time, ſo undeſerved, demands every proof of the moſt affectionate gratitude. This I will henceforth teſtify, by preferring the appellation and title of a chriſtian to every other diſtinction; and by conſtantly labouring to lead a life conformable

able to that eminent dignity, to which thy affection has raiſed me.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould ever be thankful for the grace of our baptiſm.

LECTURE LXXIII.

ON OUR BAPTISMAL VOWS.

We are buried with him by baptiſm—that we may walk in the newneſs of life. Rom. vi. 4.

YOU were adopted, at baptiſm, Theophilus, for the child of God, only on certain conditions, to which you then ſolemnly pledged yourſelf. When you were preſented at the font, the miniſter of religion aſked you *If you believed in God, the Father Almighty; in Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord; and in the Holy-Ghoſt?* You anſwered, by the mouth of them, that held you, *I do believe.* To this the prieſt added; *Doſt thou renounce Satan, his pomps and his works?* And you again replied, *I do renounce them.* You, at that time, therefore, declared in the face of the altar, before the Almighty and his Angels, that you would abandon the ſide of the devil, to eſpouſe the part of Chriſt. You promiſed to contemn the pomps of Satan; that is, the vanities and maxims of the world.

You abjured the works of the ſpirit of darkneſs; that is, every ſpecies of iniquity. For you, and in your name, were theſe promiſes made. On the day of your baptiſm, you did not, it is true, enjoy the uſe of reaſon; nor, of courſe, comprehend what was there propoſed to you. But your ſponſors anſwered for you: and you yourſelf have ſince ratified their then declarations, as often as you have made a public profeſſion of your faith; and you repeat your aſſent to them, whenever you ſign yourſelf with the ſign of the croſs, when you recite the Lord's prayer, when you aſſiſt at maſs.

It was in conſequence of theſe public and ſolemn proteſtations, that God purified you from the guilt, in which you were born; that he adorned and enriched you with his moſt precious gifts; that he impreſſed on you the ſeal of thoſe, whom he marks for his children, and adopted you as an heir to his kingdom of bliſs. You are no longer your own, therefore. You belong wholly to God. Your mind, your heart, your body are all conſecrated to him. Whatever you have or are, ought to be employed in his ſervice. To retain, after baptiſm, an affection to the pomps of Satan; to follow, in practice, the maxims of the world, and to purſue it's empty vanities, would be renouncing the title and character of a Chriſtian, and ſacrilegiouſly violating it's awful engagements. The divine impreſſion, therein received, would remain, it is true, undefaced: but it would remain only as an evidence

evidence of our deſertion and perfidy. To yield to ſin, after baptiſm, would be a profanation of our dignity: it would be trampling under foot the blood of Chriſt, which there flowed for our ſanctification; inſulting the Spirit of grace, whoſe wings then overſhadowed us, and driving him far from us, to join with his enemy.

Remember therefore, I entreat you, the vows and declarations, that you made at your baptiſm.—Never forget the obligations, which you thereby contracted. Theſe promiſes are recorded and enregiſtered in the book of life. God preſerves them in heaven. By them he will judge you, at the hour of diſſolution; and your eternal ſalvation entirely depends upon your fidelity in obſerving them. To fix them deeper in your memory, you would do well to renew them, at leaſt once a year, on the day of your baptiſm. After thanking the Deity for having reſcued you, in his great mercy, from the powers of darkneſs, in order to give you a ſhare in the kingdom of his Son: after ratifying anew the conditions, on which you were admitted into the number of his children, beſeech him to engrave on your heart the words, which were addreſſed to you, in the name of the Church, when veſted with the robe of innocence: *Receive this white garment; and ſee thou carry it, without ſtain, to the tribunal of Jeſus Chriſt, that thou mayeſt have eternal life.* And thoſe alſo, that were ſaid to you, on delivering to you the lighted taper: *Receive this burning light: and keep*

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thy baptiſm without blame: keep the commandments of God, that when the Lord ſhall come to the nuptials, thou mayſt meet him in the company of the Saints, and live for ever and ever.

What confuſion, O God! do I feel at the ſight of my paſt errors! What is become of my promiſes? Where are the treaſures thou didſt endow me with, at my admiſſion into the Church? Alas! O Lord! Be indulgent to my frailty. Thou beholdeſt at thy feet a criminal, who moſt humbly craves forgiveneſs; who wiſhes to make amends for his paſt diſloyalty and ingratitude, and to enter into new and more durable engagements with thee. Yes, my God! I now repeat and confirm the promiſes, that were made on my behalf, at the time of my baptiſm. I once more, and that for ever, renounce Satan and his pomps; and I offer myſelf to thee, to be eternally thine. The devil, thy enemy and mine, ſhall no longer have dominion over me. I abjure his works, by deteſting the ſins, that I already have, and ſtill may commit, perhaps. Impreſs me, O Lord! with a juſt abhorrence of thoſe deeds of darkneſs, that bring deſtruction on the ſoul. I renounce the world, it's vanities and it's maxims. I will accommodate my life to the dictates of thy Goſpel. I will live by the life of Chriſt, and endeavour to adopt his ſentiments. I dedicate my whole being to thee, as a living and conſtant ſacrifice, to be made agreeable in thy ſight. I will place all my future glory in bearing the name, and

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in being in reality the child of thy adoption; and my only pleaſure ſhall conſiſt in loving thee, in confiding in thee, and in nouriſhing the hope of poſſeſſing thee eternally.

The Practical Inference.

That we ought frequently to renew our baptiſmal proteſtations.

LECTURE LXXIV.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION.

He, that confirmeth us, and hath anointed us, is God: who alſo hath ſealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts. II. Cor. i. 21, 22.

THE ſecond ſacrament is called *Confirmation*; becauſe it confirms us in faith, and powerfully ſtrengthens in us that ſpiritual life, which we received at our baptiſm. Confirmation finiſhes what baptiſm began, as it's ſupplement and perfection. The grace of baptiſm is a grace of regeneration, which makes us like to new-born children.—That of confirmation is a grace of fortitude, which raiſes us, as Chriſtians, to the ſtate of perfect manhood; and enables us to combat, and to reap the laurels of victory; by bearing teſtimony to Jeſus Chriſt, even at the expence of our life.

Look,

Look, my dear Theophilus, into the acts of the Apoſtles; and you will there ſee the effects, produced upon their minds, by the deſcent of the Holy-Ghoſt. Prior to his coming, they were fearful and timorous. But as ſoon as he had viſited them, they became totally different, and began immediately to preach up Chriſt, with a courage not to be daunted. This ſame divine Spirit continues ſtill to deſcend on them, that are admitted to confirmation; and he operates the like effects on them, although it be in a manner not to be noticed by our ſenſes; becauſe the miraculous diſplay is no longer eſſential. Of this we have a proof in the ſame hiſtory of the Acts. We there read that the Apoſtles, having heard that the people of *Samaria had received the word of God, ſent Peter and John to them* to give them confirmation. *And when they were come,* ſays the ſacred text, *they prayed for them, and laid their hands upon them*; and theſe new converts *received the Holy-Ghoſt.* This ſame method the Church of God has at all times obſerved. Her biſhops, in whom alone this power reſides, as the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles, have always conferred this ſacrament, by the means of fervent prayer and the impoſition of hands.

But it may not be improper briefly to inform you of the ceremonies, that are uſed in the adminiſtration of this ſacred rite. The biſhop, turning towards them, that are to be confirmed, and extending his hands over them, ſays the following prayer.

O Almighty

O Almighty and Eternal God! who haſt vouchſafed to regenerate theſe thy ſervants by water and the Holy-Ghoſt, and haſt forgiven them their ſins, ſend down upon them, from heaven, thy ſacred Spirit of conſolation: the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding; the ſpirit of counſel and of fortitude; the ſpirit of knowledge and of piety: fill them with the ſpirit of thy fear; and impreſs them with the ſign of the croſs of Jeſus Chriſt, unto life everlaſting.— After this, with the holy chriſm, which is a mixture of oil of olives and the balm of Gilead, he anoints them, ſingly, on the forehead, ſaying; *I ſign thee with the ſign of the croſs; I confirm thee with the chriſm of ſalvation, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy-Ghoſt.* Theſe various actions and prayers tend to make us ſenſible of the effects, of which this ſacrament is productive. The impoſition of hands denotes the protection of the ſacred Spirit, who comes perſonally to reſide in us and to repleniſh us with his graces; more eſpecially with thoſe ſeven, that are peculiarly aſcribed to him; viz. *Wiſdom*, *Underſtanding*, *Counſel*, *Fortitude*, *Knowledge*, *Piety*, and *the Fear of the Lord.* The holy chriſm is expreſſive of the fruitful abundance, and of the mild, but powerful, influence of grace upon the ſoul, which it penetrates and ſtrengthens, as oil does the body.

The grand effect of confirmation, therefore, is to make us ſtrong and perfect chriſtians. Until it be received, we continue in a kind of ſpiritual infancy, ſubject to all the infirmities of that delicate

age;

age; alarmed at the ſmalleſt danger, and ſtaggered by the ſlighteſt temptation. But a chriſtian, fortified by this ſacrament, feels himſelf undaunted, and armed with a firm, an invincible reſolution. He courageouſly oppoſes all the efforts of the devil and the ſolicitations of his own paſſions. In a word, he no longer is a weak, a timorous child: he is a man, full of vigor, in a condition to bear arms, and to make head againſt his enemies. He is not aſhamed to ſubmit himſelf to the direction of the Goſpel: he declares himſelf openly in favor of virtue; and, by the example of his good behaviour, diffuſes all around him the ſweet odor of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſenſeleſs raillery of the wicked is no obſtruction to his progreſs: he defies their contempt, their threats, and even their attacks upon his perſon: and were it neceſſary to ſuffer death itſelf, in defence of his faith, he would not heſitate to encounter it, in imitation of the martyrs, rather than diſſemble his religion, or bluſh at his tenets.—For it is one of the properties of this ſacrament to mark us out for the ſoldiers of Chriſt; and this character, with which it ſtamps us, is permanent and indelible: for which reaſon, like baptiſm, it cannot be reiterated.

O God! how rich art thou in mercy! It was not enough for thee to give me a new and ſpiritual life by baptiſm; but thou haſt alſo inſtituted a ſacrament, to augment and to invigorate it. O Sacred Spirit? the inexhauſtible ſource of

of every good gift, I open to thee my heart: vouchſafe to take up thy abode in it, and to fill it with the plenitude of thy heavenly graces. *Spirit of wiſdom!* grant me this virtue, which is the partner of thy throne. *Spirit of underſtanding!* enlighten my darkneſs, and pierce it with the rays of thy celeſtial brilliancy. *Spirit of counſel!* be my guide, and direct me in the way, in which I ought to walk. *Spirit of Fortitude!* inſpire me with courage, to deſpiſe the attacks of the licentious, and to confeſs boldly the faith of Chriſt, as well by my actions, as by my words. *Spirit of knowledge!* give me the ſcience of the Saints, which conſiſts in being acquainted with thy attributes and perfections. *Spirit of piety!* inſtill into me an ardent zeal for the honor of thy ſervice, and an animated deſire for whatever may pleaſe thee. And finally, *O divine Spirit of the fear of the Lord!* fill me with a ſalutary dread of offending thy omnipotence, and with a juſt abhorrence of the evil of ſin. May this apprehenſion ever operate as a powerful check, to reſtrain me, when tempted; or to incite me to riſe ſpeedily, ſhould I have the misfortune to fall.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould beg of God to produce in us, or to renew, if already received, the bleſſed effects of confirmation.

LECTURE

LECTURE LXXV.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS REQUISITE FOR CONFIRMATION.

Wiſdom will not enter into a malicious ſoul; nor dwell in a body ſubject to ſins. Wiſdom i. 4.

IN times of early date, the ſacrament of confirmation was given immediately after baptiſm. But this cuſtom has been long ſince abrogated, and the Church now thinks proper to poſtpone it, till they, that are to receive it, be old enough to comprehend the ſanctity of this ſacrament, and to prepare themſelves for it by ſuitable diſpoſitions.

The firſt of theſe diſpoſitions is to be competently inſtructed in the principal myſteries of faith. Wherefore, it is neceſſary to have learnt and to underſtand *the Creed*, which is an abridgment of what we are to believe. It is alſo requiſite to know whatever regards *Confirmation*, which is about to be received; as likewiſe the ſacrament of *Penance*, which ought previouſly to be reſorted to. In ſhort, the more the mind is opened, the better informed ſhould they be, who preſent themſelves to be anointed. Although it ſometimes happens that ſuch little children are admitted to it, as cannot but be ignorant, yet this is a mere indulgence, in conſideration of their age and innocence: but this favor, ſhewn to them, exempts not thoſe, that are able, from endeavouring to procure every neceſſary direction.

direction. They, that approach to any ſacrament, cannot be too well informed about it: and they expoſe themſelves to great danger, if, through their own fault, they be not ſufficiently inſtructed.

A ſecond diſpoſition is to have a conſcience clean and pure from the defilements of mortal ſin. This part of the preparation is far more important and eſſential than the foregoing; and ſuch indeed is it's conſequence, that it cannot be diſpenſed with. The Holy-Ghoſt, as I have already ſaid, Theophilus, aſſures us, in direct terms, that *Wiſdom will not enter into a malicious ſoul nor dwell in a body ſubject to ſins:* that is to ſay, it will have no communication with a being, that is wilfully infected with the atrocious ſtain of guilt. The ſacrament of confirmation is a ſacrament of the living; by which I mean that it preſuppoſes a ſpiritual life in ſuch, as come to receive it; and to increaſe this ſpiritual life is it's principal effect. Now, as it is not poſſible to augment the natural life of a perſon, already deprived of it by death; ſo neither is it poſſible to ſtrengthen a chriſtian in the life of grace, if he has loſt it by ſin. Wherefore, to be confirmed, it is neceſſary either to have preſerved inviolate the innocence of baptiſm, or to have regained that guiltleſs ſtate, by a true and ſincere repentance.

How happy are you, my child, if you be ſtill in poſſeſſion of that invaluable treaſure of baptiſmal integrity. Examine your heart; and run over, in recollection, the whole of your paſt years. If your

conſcience does not reproach you with the guilt of any mortal ſin, thank God for it heartily. You poſſeſs a bleſſing, that is not to be appreciated; and will bring with you to the ſacrament of confirmation the moſt excellent of all diſpoſitions. But ſhould you have been ſo unfortunate as to have loſt this precious ornament, no other reſource is left you, than to repair to the tribunal of penance, there to purify your ſoul from it's noxious ſtains, and to recover the favor of heaven; without which you would add to your guilt, by the commiſſion of a ſacrilege.

Finally, a third diſpoſition for the ſacrament of confirmation is an ardent deſire of receiving the Holy-Ghoſt, with all the abundance of his graces. Although confirmation be not ſo neceſſary as baptiſm, to neglect it, nevertheleſs, is a grievous ſin. For it is diſobeying the orders of Chriſt, who inſtituted it with a view to ſtrengthen us in the grace of baptiſm; and who commands us to apply to it, thereby to receive that perfection of virtue, which our ſpiritual life demands. Beſides, were you to conſider the greatneſs of the gifts, that this ſacrament confers, and the want you have of them, you would ſigh longingly after them, and with all the fervor of deſire, you would entreat the Spirit of God to prepare himſelf a place in your heart, and to repleniſh it with the effuſion of his incomparable riches. It was by ſuch eagerneſs of zeal and the moſt earneſt ſupplications that the Apoſtles diſpoſed themſelves

themſelves for the coming of the Holy-Ghoſt. An imitation of their conduct will likewiſe draw him down to you. He is doubtleſs a God of bounty, ever ready to diſtribute his favors: but he requires to be ardently ſolicited, and implored with perſeverance. The beſt prayer, we can addreſs to him, on this propitious occaſion is that, which the Church puts into the mouth of her children, on the ſolemn feaſt of Pentecoſt. But let your heart, in repeating it, have a greater ſhare in it than your lips.

Come, O holy Spirit! viſit the ſouls of thy faithful; and fill with thy heavenly grace thoſe hearts, which thou haſt created. Thou art *the Spirit of conſolation, the gift of the moſt High*, the ſource of all bleſſings, the ſacred *fire*, the *charity* and the ſpiritual *unction* of the ſoul. Come with thy *ſevenfold gifts*; thou *finger of the Almighty*, who pointeſt out our duty; thou *promiſe of the Father*, who doſt ſuggeſt what we ought to ſay. Enlighten our underſtanding with thy brightneſs: inflame our hearts with thy love: ſupport our weakneſs, and give to our frail fleſh a ſtrength ſuperior to it's enemies. Keep at a diſtance from us the ſeducements of Satan: grant us an unalterable peace: make us diligently ſhun, under the guidance of thy care, every thing hurtful to our ſouls. Inſtruct us in the knowledge of the Father; and of his Son, Jeſus Chriſt; and confirm our faith in thyſelf, who art the Spirit of them both, and the eternal bond of their union. *Come, O holy*

Spirit! fill the hearts of thy faithful, and kindle in them the flames of thy pure and celeſtial love.

The Practical Inference.

That, when we addreſs ourſelves to the Holy-Ghoſt in the language of the Church, we ſhould be careful to do it with attention and fervor.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF CONFIRMATION.

Whoever ſhall confeſs me before men, I will alſo confeſs him before my Father, who is in heaven. And whoever ſhall deny me before men, I will alſo deny him, before my Father, who is in heaven. Matt. x. 32, 33.

THE ſacrament of Confirmation, while it enables us to confeſs Chriſt, even at the hazard of our lives, enjoins it alſo as a duty. A Chriſtian, confirmed in his faith, is under the obligation of defending it, if he falls into the company either of unbelievers, that impugn it's tenets, or of libertines, that combat it's morality. Jeſus Chriſt laid this injunction on his Apoſtles, when he promiſed them his holy Spirit. *You ſhall receive*, he ſaid to them, *the Holy-Ghoſt; and you ſhall bear teſtimony to me in Jeruſalem and in Samaria, and to the furthermoſt confines of the earth.* What is it to bear teſtimony to Chriſt, unleſs

unleſs it be courageouſly to defend his doctrine againſt all ſuch, as preſume to attack it; and, in ſupport of his cauſe, to fear neither ſcorn nor menaces, nor even the terrors of death, in it's moſt frightful appearance. The dreadful puniſhment, with which he threatens thoſe, that may be wanting in this duty, ſhews how indiſpenſable it is. *Whoever ſhall confeſs me before men*, he ſays in the words above recited, *I will alſo confeſs him before my Father: and whoever ſhall dare to deny me, I will alſo deny him.* Hence it is a crime, we ſee, highly diſpleaſing in the eyes of Jeſus Chriſt, not to own him in the face of the world, and not to declare ourſelves for him, ſhould he be inſulted in our preſence.

You have no longer, my dear Theophilus, any reaſon to fear being moleſted on the ſcore of your religion. The equity of an enlightened legiſlature, and the benevolence of an indulgent government have ſilenced ſuch apprehenſions. But there ſtill exiſt dangers, which, though of a leſs menacing aſpect, are more perilous in their nature. For you will often meet with perſons, whoſe principles are vitiated, and who will ſeek to corrupt yours, by the language of impiety. The fallacious ſophiſtry of ſuch people as theſe, and their artful inſinuations, are frequently more injurious to the budding mind of youth, than the cold blaſts of oppreſſion. But oppoſe to them a courage worthy of a ſoldier of Jeſus Chriſt. Maintain reſolutely the intereſt

and the honor of your maſter. Tell them, with a modeſty becoming your age, what you have been taught in the inſtructions, given you on the ſubject of religion. A few words from the mouth of an innocent and artleſs child may be attended with a better effect, by the aſſiſtance of heaven, than the moſt ſtudied harangues. At leaſt ſhew, by a reſerved and ſerious air, that you abhor all profaneneſs and the very ſhadow of infidelity. Would you bear patiently to hear aſperſed the reputation of a beloved parent? I cannot think you would. How then can you be unconcerned, when the God, that made you, who is your moſt affectionate parent, and will be your eternal reward, is inſulted in your preſence?

You may find, perhaps, among thoſe of your own age preſumptuous ſtriplings, who will laugh at ſuch, as are virtuous, and wantonly make them the objects of their deriſion. But fear not ſuch cenſors; nor pay any regard to their ſcoffs. Alas! Did you but ſee into their hearts; the ſhameful paſſions, that enſlave them; the ſecret inquietude, that haunts, and the unrelenting remorſe, that perſecutes them; ſo far from dreading their cenſures, you would compaſſionate their blindneſs: and the ſight of the miſeries, to which they are expoſed, would only ſerve to confirm you in the admiration of virtue. It is by theſe means, chiefly, that is, by the purity of your morals and the regularity of your conduct, that you are to confeſs Jeſus Chriſt; and

to

win over to him, if poſſible, or, at leaſt to confound them, that calumniate his doctrine. Example is more efficacious and more perſuaſive than words: nor does any thing do ſo much credit, or give ſuch ſupport to our divine religion, as a virtuous life.—This is what St. James calls ſhewing, proving and preaching the faith by works. To encourage yourſelf to a conſtant diſcharge of the engagements of confirmation, remember that the biſhop, in conferring it, marked, with the holy chriſm, the ſign of the croſs upon your forehead; to intimate that you were neither to be aſhamed of your faith, nor to diſgrace it by a behaviour unworthy of the Goſpel. Defend therefore, and ſuſtain it by the judicioufneſs of your diſcourſe, and ſtill more by the integrity and the edification of your deportment.

Spirit of fortitude! who didſt endue the Apoſtles with *a virtue from on high*, and enable them to brave contempt, torments and death, in the propagation of the Goſpel, give me ſome portion in this invincible courage, that I never may be led aſtray by the converſation of the wicked. Their raillery, I confeſs, does ſome times intimidate me: human reſpects, at others, prevent me from owning virtue openly, in the face of them, that deride it. But, O Lord! thou canſt give ſtrength to the weakeſt.—The Apoſtles were full of fears, before thou didſt viſit and fill them with thy gifts. But, by thy Sovereign power, thou changedſt their timidity into boldneſs, and their weakneſs into ſtrength. Deign,

O God! to operate the like effects upon me.—Grant me grace to deſpiſe the ſolicitations of the profligate, and never to be aſhamed of either my faith or it's mandates. Make me do honor to my religion by the conſiſtency of my works, and ſupport the illuſtrious character and dignity of a chriſtian, by a reſolute adherence to the doctrines of Chriſtianity. If there is any thing to be ſuffered from the profane and irreligious, ought I not to think myſelf happy in having a ſhare in the contempt, which my Saviour endured for me?

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould diſregard the ridicule and deriſion of the impious.

LECTURE LXXVII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

Whoſe ſins you ſhall forgive, they are forgiven them. John xx. 23.

NOT ſatisfied with having given us a ſpiritual life by baptiſm, the Almighty has moreover provided us with the means to regain it, if unhappily loſt by ſin. The ſacrament of *Penance*, ordained by him for this purpoſe, has the power of remitting whatever crimes we may be guilty of,

of, after the ablution of the ſacred font. How great, Theophilus, and incomprehenſible are the mercies of our God! What ſentiments of gratitude ought they not to excite within us! It was already a favour done us of infinite eſtimation, that God ſhould ſhew us a compaſſion, which he refuſed to the rebel-angels: that he ſhould give us a Redeemer, and apply his merits to us, by the means of a previous ſacrament. He might have forſaken thoſe, who, after this firſt grace, ſhould have defiled themſelves anew. But no. He has not liſtened to the voice of his juſtice. He is willing to receive his rebellious creatures, as often as they return to him; and has prepared a ſaving plank for them, after the ſhipwreck of their innocence. Such is the expreſſion of the holy Fathers, in ſpeaking of this ſacrament; inaſmuch as it is the only reſource, that a chriſtian has left, who has loſt the grace of baptiſm.

This conciliatory ſacrament was inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt, after his reſurrection from the dead; when, breathing on his Apoſtles, he ſpoke to them thus: *Receive ye the Holy-Ghoſt: whoſe ſins you ſhall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whoſe ſins you ſhall retain, they are retained.* By theſe words, he appointed them the judges of ſin; and gave to them and to their ſucceſſors, the power of remitting, or retaining it's guilt; with a promiſe to ratify the ſentence in heaven, which they ſhould pronounce upon earth. To this ſame purpoſe he had,

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during his life-time, ſaid to St. Peter: *I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatſoever thou ſhalt bind upon earth, it ſhall be bound alſo in heaven: and whatever thou ſhalt looſe upon earth, it ſhall be looſed alſo in heaven.* Penance, therefore, is a ſacrament, that does away our ſins. But what ſins, you may ſay? All actual ſins, I reply, without exception. Yes, my dear child, this ſacrament, by the inſtitution of the Son of God, has the virtue of remitting all ſorts of ſins. There is no crime ſo enormous, ſo atrociouſly black, that it cannot efface; and this not only once, but as often as we reſort to it with proper diſpoſitions. Mortal ſins are the matter, upon which it principally acts.—Whoever is conſcious of ſuch crimes, as deſtroy the life of the ſoul, cannot otherwiſe obtain forgiveneſs, than by applying to the ſacrament. "Let no one "tell me," ſays St. Auſtin, "I do penance by myſelf; "I do penance in the ſight of God. That is not ſuf- "ficient. We muſt have recourſe to the ſacrament. "For ſhall Chriſt have ſaid unmeaningly to his "Apoſtles and their ſucceſſors, *Whoſe ſins you "ſhall forgive, they are forgiven?* Shall he in vain "have intruſted the keys of heaven to his Church?"

As the ſins, committed previouſly to baptiſm, can only be obliterated by that firſt of all the ſacraments; ſo the ſins, ſubſequent to that period, can only be effaced by the ſacrament of penance. I ſpeak of mortal ſins, however. For as to venial ſins, the forgiveneſs of them may be obtained by prayer,

prayer and good works. Nevertheleſs, it is adviſeable to ſubject them humbly to the power of the keys: firſt, becauſe it is often extremely difficult to diſtinguiſh venial from mortal ſin: and ſecondly, becauſe the abſolution thereby received from them tends to give us additional energy. The ſacrament of penance, therefore, is like a ſecond baptiſm, offered to them, that have had the misfortune to loſe the advantage of the firſt. But take notice, Theophilus, this ſecond baptiſm is rigorous, and full of labor and pain, requiring tears and ſtrong exertions. While, deſirous to diſplay his mercy, the Almighty, by the firſt baptiſm, acquits the ſinner wholly, without reſerving any thing to his juſtice; in the ſecond, by a conduct, in which theſe two attributes are blended, he receives him into favor again only upon hard conditions and humiliating terms. "In fact," ſays the Council of Trent, "the juſtice of God requires that he ſhould purſue "a different method in his treatment of thoſe, who, "before their baptiſm, tranſgreſſed through mere ig-"norance; and in his reception of ſuch, as having "already been liberated from the ſervitude of ſin, "and repleniſhed with the graces of his beneficent "Spirit, dare anew to profane his temple, and to "contriſtate the Holy-Ghoſt." Beſides, the rigors of penance are not only a proper remedy for the expiation of paſt ſins: they are alſo a kind of curb, which checks the baneful progreſs of vice; which puts a reſtraint upon the paſſions, and compels a

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man to be more watchful, and more reſolutely firm, in reſiſting the allurements and temptations, that environ him.

Alas! O Lord! How unhappy ſhould we be, if, after loſing the grace of baptiſm, we had no means to recover it! Thou mighteſt have delivered us for once from the tyranny of the devil, and then have abandoned us, if, through our own fault, we ſhould have forfeited that grace: and to ourſelves alone would the whole blame have been imputable. But thou knoweſt our frailty; and thou art rich in mercy. Thou haſt opened the way for our return, by the inſtitution of a ſacrament, which is poſſeſſed of the power to remit all our ſins, and completely to reinſtate us in our priſtine integrity. O goodneſs! O mercy of my God! What advantage will the ſalvation of thy creatures be to thee, that, in their behalf, thou ſhouldeſt ſacrifice the rights of thy juſtice? It is true that, in order to this ſecond reconcilement, thou demandeſt compunctive ſighs and trying exertions. But is it not juſt that an ungrateful wretch, who has abuſed thy indulgence, ſhould be treated with greater ſeverity, than one, who has not been favored with the marks of thy bounty? No, dear Lord! nothing will I think too much to recover my loſt righteouſneſs. I will chearfully ſubmit to all the mortifications of penance: happy, if, by ſo doing, I can appeaſe thy injured mercy.

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The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould frequently have recourſe to the ſacrament of penance.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ON CONTRITION.

Know, and ſee that is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord, thy God. Jeremy ii. 19.

TO obtain the pardon of ſin, three conditions are required. Firſt, the ſinner muſt hate and deteſt his ſins, by *contrition*. Secondly, he muſt make them known to a prieſt of God, by *confeſſion*. And thirdly, he muſt atone, as far as in him lies, for the injury done to the Almighty and to his neighbour, by *ſatisfaction*. You would be glad, no doubt, my child, to have each of theſe parts of the ſacrament of penance made clear and eaſy to you. I will endeavour therefore to do it; beginning by contrition, which is the firſt and the moſt eſſential of them.

Contrition is a ſorrow for and a deteſtation of ſin committed, with a firm reſolution of never more being guilty of it. This leading diſpoſition is ſo abſolutely neceſſary, that, without it, no ſin, not even venial, can poſſibly be forgiven. An illneſs, that takes away the faculty of ſpeech, diſpenſes from

from confeſſion. A ſudden death would exempt from the duty of ſatisfaction, at leaſt as to this life. But nothing can excuſe us from the obligation of contrition. That ſoul alone, which is penetrated with ſorrow for the great evil, it has done, gives glory, ſays the prophet, to the juſtice of the Lord.— To whom does God promiſe, in his ſacred word, the pardon of their ſins? To thoſe only, who are converted to him with all their heart, with the ſobs and tears of a bitter repentance: to thoſe only, who rend their hearts, and not their garments. To whom do we there read that he ever granted this forgiveneſs? To ſuch alone, as bewailed their crimes with the groanings of compunction. Hear, Theophilus, the expreſſions of undiſguiſed repentance: *Father*, ſays the returning prodigal, *I have ſinned againſt thee and againſt heaven. No longer am I worthy to be called thy ſon. To thee*, David ſays, *have I ſinned, O Lord!* and my *iniquity is always before me.* What profound ſentiments of ſorrow are contained in theſe few words?

Contrition, to be ſuch as ſuffices, muſt poſſeſs four qualities. It muſt be *internal*; that is to ſay, it muſt be ſeated in the heart, and not on the lips only. It is not enough to read over, or to repeat, acts of contrition: for it is the heart, that has ſinned; and the heart muſt be the reſidence of the ſorrow conceived for ſin. Contrition muſt be *ſupernatural*; that is, it muſt be the inſpiration of the Holy-Ghoſt, and not merely a natural impulſe.—

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To deteſt ſin, becauſe it has occaſioned us ſome temporal inconvenience; ſuch as a reprimand, an illneſs, a loſs of property, &c. is not a contrition, that will ſuffice to obtain it's forgiveneſs. We muſt repent of it for the love of God; inaſmuch as it is an outrage offered to him, and diſpleaſes him infinitely. Contrition muſt be *ſovereign*; by which I mean to ſay that it muſt be ſuperior to every other grief, and ſuch as cordially to diſpoſe us to make any imaginable ſacrifice, rather than be guilty of it again. In fact, ſin is the greateſt of all evils; and it brings with it the loſs of the moſt valuable of all goods, even of our Supreme good. Wherefore, the conſciouſneſs of having committed it ought to be more afflictive and diſtreſſing, than the preſſure of all the miſeries, to which this life can ſubject us.—However, it is not neceſſary that this ſorrow ſhould affect us ſenſibly, nor otherwiſe diſcover itſelf than by the teſtimony of our actions, which are the criterion, whereby to judge of it. Finally, contrition muſt be *univerſal*; that is to ſay, it muſt include all the mortal ſins, of whatever kind, with which our conſcience may reproach us. Our contrition is not ſincere, if there be any mortal ſin, to which the heart remains attached; becauſe every mortal ſin, is an inſult to the Deity, and is deſerving of hell-fire; and of courſe, there is not one, that we are not bound to abhor, if we wiſh to be reſtored to the favor of heaven.

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To procure this contrition, Theophilus, you muſt beg it of the Almighty, the giver of all good gifts, by fervent and humble prayer. We are very able, of ourſelves, to offend God by ſin; but we cannot, without his help, repent of it, as we ought. In the next place, you muſt ponder well the motives, that are calculated to produce it.—Conſider then who it is, that you have inſulted. It is your Creator, your Father, your Benefactor, who has heaped his favors on you; your Saviour, who has redeemed you at the price of his own blood. How enormous therefore is your ingratitude. Conſider again what you have loſt by ſin.—An everlaſting happineſs was deſtined for you, and you have forfeited your claim to it. What a loſs! Conſider to what ſin expoſes you. The fire of hell is it's puniſhment, in the eternal manſions of deſpair. How dreadful a doom! It is not poſſible to reflect ſeriouſly on truths ſo affecting, without conceiving an abhorrence and deteſtation of ſin.

Contrition is different, according to the difference of the motives, on which it is founded. It is *perfect*, when we are ſorry for having offended God, becauſe he is infinitely good: and, when built on this foundation, it juſtifies the ſinner, independently even of the ſacrament: provided, nevertheleſs, that he deſire and receive it, whenever an opportunity ſhall offer. It is *imperfect*, when it reſults only from the ſhame of having ſinned, or from the fear of being puniſhed, &c. and this kind of contrition does not

not juſtify of itſelf; but it diſpoſes the ſinner for juſtification, through the medium of the ſacrament: on the ſuppoſition, however, that it contain all the qualities required for a genuine contrition.

Give me, O Lord! thyſelf that contrition, which is neceſſary to merit the forgiveneſs of my ſins. Pierce me with the moſt lively ſorrow, at the ſight of my iniquities. Make me feel that deteſtation and abhorrence, they deſerve; and inſpire me with the reſolution of renouncing them for ever.—My heart will continue inſenſible, unleſs thou toucheſt it by thy grace; and my will bent on evil, unleſs thou helpeſt it to break it's bonds. Soften then the obduracy and hardneſs of the one, by the penetrating virtue of thy unction: and burſt the chains of the other by the irreſiſtable efficacy of thy power. Make me thoroughly ſenſible of the deformity of ſin; and tremblingly apprehenſive of the direful puniſhments, that await it. I have offended thee, who art my God, my Creator, my Supreme and Sovereign good. I have forfeited my right to the inheritance of heaven. I have deſervedly incurred the chaſtiſements of hell. *Have mercy on me, O Lord! have mercy on me.* I abhor my paſt iniquity. I renounce it eternally; and confiding in thy goodneſs, I will henceforth love and ſerve thee with fidelity, during the remainder of my life.

The Practical Inference.

That our principal endeavour, when we are preparing for confeſſion, ſhould be to acquire a contrition of heart.

LECTURE LXXIX.

ON PURPOSES OF AMENDMENT.

Let the wicked man forſake his way, and the unjuſt man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him. Iſaias lv. 7.

CONTRITION, as I have already hinted, muſt include a purpoſe of amendment, that is to ſay, a firm reſolution of ſinning no more.—But obſerve, Theophilus, attentively that the diſpoſition I am going to ſpeak of, muſt be a fixed determination of the will, and not a tranſient deſire. We cannot hope to obtain the forgiveneſs of our ſins, unleſs we renounce them from our hearts. Nor muſt we look for a pardon, unleſs we enter ſincerely into the ſentiments of David, when he ſaid to Almighty God: *I have ſworn, and am determined to keep the judgments of thy juſtice.* Upon the neceſſity of this change of mind the Deity explains himſelf clearly, in the words above recited: *Let the wicked man forſake his ways, and the unjuſt*

juſt man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him. He therefore alone has room to look for mercy, who renounces his iniquity, and abjures it from his heart. Beſides, would it not be laughing at the divine Majeſty, to implore his pardon for ſins, that we are diſpoſed to repeat? to deprecate his wrath, which we are again ready to provoke?

But how ſhall we diſtinguiſh a firm reſolution from a feeble deſire? There are three marks, I anſwer, whereby to know it aſſuredly: the firſt of which is a change and alteration of life. Such a one formerly was proud, paſſionate, intractable, neglectful of his duties and regardleſs of religion. He is become humble, mild, obedient, induſtrious at work and attentive to his devotions. Here, I ſay, is a ſure evidence, an indubitable proof of the ſincerity of his reſolutions. A ſecond mark is to avoid the occaſions, that are the uſual avenues to ſin. And of theſe there are two ſorts. Thoſe of the firſt kind lead to ſin of themſelves; ſuch as immodeſt books, laſcivious ſongs or pictures, indecent plays and bad company. Thoſe of the ſecond claſs are no otherwiſe the occaſions of ſin, than through the particular diſpoſitions and habits of the perſons, that unluckily are involved in them: as certain profeſſions, which, though lawful in themſelves, become the occaſions of offending God to ſuch, as are unqualified to diſcharge their obligations. All theſe occaſions we are bound to relin-

quiſh: and to continue in them voluntarily is a certain conviction that our purpoſes of amendment go no farther than the tongue.

The Holy Ghoſt tells us that *he, who loves the danger, ſhall periſh in it.* We may ſometimes find it hard to withdraw from ſuch occaſions. But we muſt reſolve on making the ſacrifice, unleſs we would riſk our eternal welfare and abandon our future hopes. This is the meaning of thoſe words of Chriſt; *If thy hand or thy foot ſcandalize thee, cut it off, and caſt it from thee.* Or *if thy eye ſcandalize thee, pluck it out, and throw it away. It is better that thou ſhouldeſt enter into life maimed, than be plunged whole into eternal flames.* That is to ſay, although the object, that gives you ſcandal, be as dear to you and as uſeful, as any thing you can imagine, ſtill you muſt ſeparate yourſelf from it, if you wiſh to ſave your ſoul.

Finally, the third mark of the ſincerity of our good reſolutions is a ſerious application to eradicate bad habits, or that facility, we may have contracted, of committing certain ſins, into which we relapſe by an almoſt natural propenſity. To effect this, we muſt keep a conſtant eye upon ourſelves, and carefully watch the various motions of our heart. And to facilitate the maſtery over our ſtubborn paſſions, it will be highly proper often to do ſuch things, as are contrary to thoſe bad habits; for example, to practiſe meekneſs, if prone to anger; obedience, if ungovernable, &c. and to

enjoin

enjoin ourſelves ſome penance, whenever we may have yielded to the prevalence of ſuch ill cuſtoms. But where no attempts are made to conquer them; where our falls are as frequent as ever; where we neglect to repent of, and to get abſolved from them by confeſſion, there is an undoubted certainty that our reſolutions were defective, if not wholly illuſory.

O my God! I now make, in thy preſence, a firm determination to avoid my paſt errors, and to ſerve thee, in future, with an inviolable fidelity. I will, from this moment, change my life, and labor in earneſt to overcome my bad inclinations. I renounce all ſuch books, ſuch companions, ſuch entertainments, as have already been the occaſions of my falling into ſin. But, dear Lord! all my precautions will be vain, unleſs thy Almighty arm ſupport me. Give efficacy to my reſolutions. They are the effects of thy kindneſs. Grant me then the grace of adhering to them unalterably. Defend me, by thy protection, againſt the ſnares of the devil, againſt the dangers of the world, and, above all, againſt the perils of my own miſerable frailty. For from this ſource chiefly my apprehenſions alarm me. But thou art able to ſuſtain my weakneſs, how deplorable ſoever; and thou haſt promiſed that thou wilt. This reflection conſoles me, and animates my confidence; ſince ſupported by thy power I know nothing can hurt me.

The Practical Inference.

That we ought daily to renew our good purpoſes of amendment.

LECTURE LXXX.

ON CONFESSION.

I have ſaid I will confeſs againſt myſelf my injuſtice to the Lord; and thou haſt forgiven me the wickedneſs of my ſin. Ps. xxxi. 5.

THE ſecond part of the ſacrament of penance is *Confeſſion*, or the declaration of our ſins to the miniſter of God.

To him therefore we muſt accuſe ourſelves of all our mortal ſins; even of ſuch, as lie concealed at the bottom of our heart, as evil thoughts and bad deſires. This obligation enſues of courſe from the power, granted by Chriſt, to his miniſters of forgiving or retaining ſins, as mentioned in the Goſpel. By that official commiſſion, as I may call it, they are appointed judges of the conſciences of mankind. But this duty they cannot diſcharge, without knowing the ſtate of the cauſes, upon which they are authoriſed to decide: and this again they cannot be acquainted with but by the voluntary confeſſion of the ſinner himſelf. Such has

has ever been the doctrine and the practice of the Church.

Taught by her, then, we believe that to obtain the pardon of our tranſgreſſions, we muſt confeſs them all candidly, without reſerve or diſguiſe: and that, if we voluntarily conceal any one ſingle mortal ſin, we look in vain for forgiveneſs; and even aggravate our guilt, by the addition of a ſacrilege. Moreover, the number of our ſins, their kind, and the more conſiderable circumſtances, if any ſuch attend them, are alſo to be declared. The number I ſay; by telling as nearly as poſſible, how often we have committed each ſin: the kind; for it is not enough to ſay, in general terms, that we are guilty of many ſins; but we muſt ſpecify particularly what ſort of ſins we have fallen into, whether of ſwearing, lying, detraction, &c. without which neither the ſtate of our conſcience can be known, nor proper remedies adminiſtered. We muſt mention alſo the circumſtances, ſhould there be any of importance. And of theſe there are two ſorts.—Some of them are of that moment, as to alter the nature of a ſin; as for inſtance, to rob a church is not a ſimple theft; it is a ſacrilege, which is a crime of a much fouler die. Others augment the guilt of a ſin, without changing it's ſpecies; for example, to ſteal a guinea from any one is a theft in it's nature, and a very conſiderable one; but to ſteal it from a poor perſon, whoſe main dependance it may be, perhaps, is an offence far more atrocious,

than to take it from a rich man, whom it may not injure very materially; and this would be a circumſtance to be explained in confeſſion.

Wherefore, Theophilus, to acquit yourſelf properly of this important duty, a careful examination and enquiry into your conſcience is indiſpenſably neceſſary. Without this, you would be liable to overlook many of your ſins; of courſe, you would not confeſs them, and in conſequence of this neglect, the guilt of them would ſtill attach to you. Inſtead of recovering the grace of God, you would thus multiply your demerits with him. Previouſly, then, to your approaching the tribunal of penance, you ſhould make it your buſineſs to retire from company, to baniſh from your mind all impertinent thoughts, and alone with your conſcience, to implore the light of heaven, to ſearch diligently into the commandments of God, the precepts of his Church, and the obligations of your ſtate of life; that you may ſee wherein you have failed: in fine, to diſcover all your faults, their number and the circumſtances attending them. For your ſcrutiny muſt extend to all theſe different objects.

But this inquiry ſhould be made without diſquietude or uneaſineſs. If you have performed what depended on yourſelf; if you have employed upon this concern the attention and time, that a work of ſuch moment requires, you ought to reſt ſatisfied. You have to do with a tender parent, who, though he

he forbids you to be careleſs, does not wiſh you to be anxious. All he commands is that you examine yourſelf attentively; that you ſincerely confeſs all the faults, of which you are conſcious; that you deteſt them cordially, and be fully determined to avoid, in future, both the ſins themſelves and the occaſions leading to them. Theſe conditions fulfilled, although, through forgetfulneſs, ſome of your tranſgreſſions may have happened to eſcape your notice at the time of confeſſion, yet they are to be conſidered as remitted and forgiven with the reſt. "For the ſins," ſays the Council of Trent, "that do not occur to a perſon, who makes a careful ſearch into them, are ſuppoſed, in general, to "be included in his confeſſion: and it is for theſe "we ſay with the Pſalmiſt; *From my hidden ſins* "*cleanſe me, O Lord.*" It is ſufficient to declare the overſight on your next application to the ſacred tribunal.

O my God! I will throw myſelf at thy feet, in the perſon of thy miniſter. Thou haſt given him the power to operate my cure: but to do this effectually he muſt be acquainted with my maladies.—Theſe then I will open to him by a full declaration and diſcovery of my guilt. Direct my heart and tongue, that this confeſſion may be veſted with the properties required: that I may accuſe myſelf honeſtly of all my known tranſgreſſions; that I may not ſeek to excuſe them or to extenuate their enormity; that I may not relate them with indifference

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and a criminal inſenſibility, but may declare them in a ſpirit of penance and in the bitterneſs of my ſoul. Make me docile to the inſtructions, thou mayeſt give me by thy ſervant, and penetrable to the impreſſions, he may endeavour to excite in me. Grant him, O Lord! thy light, to ſee clearly the ſtate of my ſoul, and to preſcribe proper remedies to the diſorders, that infeſt it. Inſpire him with that zeal, which touches, which pierces, which changes the heart; that he may, once for all, fix mine in the abhorrence of vice, and in the moſt unaffected eſteem for righteouſneſs and virtue.

The Practical Inference.

That, after a ſerious examen, we muſt accuſe ourſelves humbly and ſincerely of all our faults.

LECTURE LXXXI.

ON THE CRIME OF CONCEALMENT IN CONFESSION.

Be not aſhamed to confeſs thy ſins.—He, that hideth his ſins, ſhall not proſper: but he, that confeſſeth and forſaketh them, ſhall obtain mercy. Prov. xxviii. 13.

I Have already told you, my dear Theophilus, that willingly to conceal any one mortal ſin is not only to fruſtrate the intentions of the ſacrament,

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and render void the abſolution, received in the confeſſional; but alſo to become guilty of an additional crime, and that of the deepeſt die; viz. a ſacrilege, a vile profanation of the mercies of the Deity. In this caſe, inſtead of appeaſing the anger of heaven, we ſhould moſt daringly outrage it: we ſhould trample on the ſacred blood of the incarnate Son of God; which, thus lighting on an unworthy and unqualified object, is more criminally profaned, than when ſhed by the Jews ſo ignominiouſly on mount Calvary.

Nevertheleſs, how many young people are guilty of this atrociouſneſs! And what are the cauſes of an evil ſo deplorable? In ſome of them it is the ſhame of confeſſing certain faults. The devil, that ſpirit of malevolence, and the father of lies, diminiſhes in their eyes the enormity of the ſin, before they commit it; and, when it comes to be confeſſed, he is no leſs induſtrious in unveiling all it's foulneſs.

But there is nothing worſe grounded than this ill-conceived ſhame. Attend, my child, to the reaſons, that ought to enable you to get the better of it. The confeſſor is obligated by every tie, both by the internal voice of conſcience, and the external force of human laws, to the moſt inviolable ſecrecy. To declare our ſins to him is like declaring them to nobody. Out of the ſacred tribunal, he can make no ſort of uſe of what may have been mentioned to him. Neither inſults nor reproaches

proaches are to be apprehended from him. Charity alone and mildneſs will dictate his inſtructions, and influence his advice. The perſon, to whom you accuſe yourſelf, is not a ſpotleſs Angel: he is a man, like yourſelf, ſubject to the weakneſs and imperfections of human nature; and, of courſe, ready to commiſerate and to ſympathize with yours. He is a faithful friend, whoſe ſole wiſh is to reclaim and to bring you back to virtue. He is a benevolent parent, who will be affected by the confidence, which you repoſe in his kindneſs, and will be happy to aſſiſt you in your urgent diſtreſs.

But allow me to aſk you a queſtion. Would ſhame withold you from diſcovering to a phyſician any ſecret ailment, you might be afflicted with; eſpecially, was death to be apprehended from your concealment of it? Would not the deſire of life overpower ſo ill-timed a ſilence, and huſh all ſuch repugnances? How then can you ſuffer ſhame to maſter you, when your ineſtimable ſoul has received a mortal wound? Or how not find courage to lay open it's diſorders to a perſon, that is competent to adminiſter relief to them? Beſides, what advantage will you gain by keeping, at preſent, from the eyes of your confeſſor the knowledge of your ſins? Can you conceal them from the ſight of God? And muſt not theſe very crimes, which you are ſo averſe to diſcloſe, be, ſooner or later at leaſt, confeſſed, if you pretend to ſalvation? O God! impreſs forcibly theſe reflections on the minds of all

thoſe,

thoſe, whom this lecture may reach; and may they effectually operate to preſerve them from the misfortune of being overcome by a falſe ſhame.

Others again there are, whom the fear of not being permitted to participate in the ſacred myſteries deters from expoſing their guilt to the ſight of their director. But there can be nothing more abſurd, nothing more criminal than thus impiouſly to profane two ſacraments, on ſuch frivolous apprehenſions. Alas, O Lord! What a diſpoſition to bring to thy table, to come to it under the cover of a diſſimulation ſo atrocious? Would it not be infinitely better to defer approaching it for a time, than to render ourſelves culpable of ſo dreadful a ſacrilege? The conſequence of it would be that we ſhould reproach ourſelves with it the remainder of our life; or grow hardened in vice, and be eternally damned. On the other ſide, he, who has frankly and candidly unboſomed himſelf to his confeſſor, and taken proper time to ſound the depth of his reſolutions, is handſomely repaid for the little trial, he ſubmitted to. The delay was but ſhort; it is over and done with; and nothing now remains but the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and the approbation of his heart. He is happy in being aſſured that his communion was performed according to the dictates of religion: his mind is at eaſe: during the reſt of his days, he will bleſs the fortunate hour, in which he gained a victory over himſelf, that enſures him tranquillity in this life,

and

and the bliſs of heaven in a future. You are convinced, I hope, Theophilus, that there is no room for heſitation, and firmly reſolved to lay open to your director whatever ſins you may be conſcious of. Treaſure up carefully in your mind what I have ſaid upon this ſubject: and let ſincerity, the moſt unreſerved ſincerity, be your guide, whenever you preſent yourſelf at the tribunal of confeſſion, without liſtening to ſhame or to the ſuggeſtions of the devil.

No, my God! never will I pay attention to any repugnance, that I may experience, in the declaration of my ſins. Drive far from me this dumb devil, who would wiſh to tie my tongue, and to render me guilty of a moſt horrible ſacrilege. Grant I may be acceſſible to no other fear, than that of thy judgments, and of thoſe never-ending puniſhments, with which thou threateneſt the ſinner.—No, Lord! I will conceal nothing from the prieſt, who is thy vicegerent in the confeſſional. Far from me all diſſimulation. I am ſenſible that to declare my faults to him is to declare them to thyſelf: and and how can I expect to hide, or to diſguiſe them from thee: from thee, O God! I ſay, who knoweſt them better than I do, and whoſe penetrative eye views the bottom of my heart? If there be any confuſion attending this diſcovery, is it not juſt that I ſhould ſubmit to it for the expiation of my crimes? Had I not better put up with a momentary ſhame, than expoſe myſelf hereafter to an eternal

nal confuſion? But even this humiliation thou haſt made bearable and light. For it is to one only perſon that this confeſſion need be made: to a perſon, reſtricted by all kind of conſiderations to an indiſpenſable ſecrecy: to a ſinner, like myſelf, who has his own infirmities to bewail, and who is diſpoſed to pity mine. This trifling uneaſineſs will be amply recompenſed by the comfort, my heart will experience: my conſcience will be lightened of a burthen, that oppreſſed it; and I ſhall return from the confeſſional full of joy and conſolation.

The Practical Inference.

That ſo far from yielding to the temptation of concealing certain ſins, we ſhould begin our confeſſion by a ſincere avowal of them.

LECTURE LXXXII.

ON SATISFACTION.

Bring forth fruit worthy of penance. Matt iii. 8.

SATISFACTION, which is the third part of the ſacrament of Penance, is a reparation of the injury done, by ſin, to God or to our neighbour. To ſatisfy for our tranſgreſſions, therefore, is either to do or to ſuffer ſomething, with a view to appeaſe the divine wrath, irritated by our crimes;

or

or to make amends to our neighbour for whatever harm, we may have occaſioned him. And this ſatisfaction is ſo neceſſary, to obtain the forgiveneſs of our faults, through the ſacrament of penance, that without being willing, at leaſt, to make it, our hopes of pardon would be vain. For as it has pleaſed the Almighty, who alone remits our ſins, and who, indiſputably, is the maſter of his own conditions; as it has pleaſed him, I ſay, to impoſe this duty on us; ſo it is eſſentially requiſite that we accede to his terms, if we deſire to find mercy from him, and to regain his loſt favor.

In the ſacrament of baptiſm, God diſpenſes with ſatisfaction. For which reaſon, the miniſters of the Church never pretend to aſſign any penance to ſuch, as are admitted to the font, whatever crimes they may ſtand charged with. But it is not the ſame with regard to the tribunal of penance. The Almighty, by this ſacred rite, remits, together with our ſins, only the eternal puniſhment due to them; ſubjecting us, at the ſame time, by the order of his juſtice, to a temporal infliction. Many paſſages of the Scripture evince the truth of this aſſertion; but one may ſuffice to prove it.—David had the misfortune to commit the grievous crimes of adultery and murder. God immediately commands the prophet Nathan to wait upon and to repreſent his guilt to him. David humbles himſelf, upon the ſpot, and confeſſes his iniquity.—Upon which, the prophet tells him that the Almighty

mighty has forgiven him: *But*, he adds, *becauſe thou haſt occaſioned the name of God to be blaſphemed, the ſcourge of affliction ſhall perſecute thy houſe; and the child, that is born to thee, ſhall aſſuredly die.* In fact, the remainder of his life was an almoſt continued ſcene of diſaſters, according to the prediction of Nathan, for the expiation of his crimes, although the Deity had pardoned them. There remains, as we ſee, therefore, a temporal chaſtiſement due to ſin, after the eternal puniſhment is remitted, by the ſentence of abſolution. They, that die before they have endured this temporal infliction, undergo it in the next life; and complete, in the flames of purgatory, the atonement of their faults. Nor is it otherwiſe than conſiſtent with the dictates of divine juſtice that ſuch, as have abuſed the original grace of baptiſm, ſhould be admitted to a reconcilement only upon harſher conditions.

Beſides, the mercy of the Sovereign Being affords to the penitent ſinner, even in the chaſtiſements, to which it ſubjects him, ample matter of advantage. He finds therein a curb to the impetuoſity of his paſſions, and an antidote to the poiſon of his inveterate habits. For the ſatisfaction, enjoined him, ſhould be calculated not only to atone for the ſins, he may have perpetrated; but likewiſe to eradicate the vicious propenſity, that has led him to commit them: ſuch as humiliations for pride, alms-deeds for avarice, faſting for intemperance, the mortification of his ſenſes for impurity, &c. and

theſe penances ought alſo to bear a certain proportion to the crimes; that is, they ought to be more or leſs ſevere, according to the grievouſneſs of the offences, or the frequency of their repetition. "The "puniſhment," ſays St. Cyprian, "ought to equal "the fault; and the remedy adminiſtered to be as "ſevere as the diſorder."

The works of ſatisfaction, that penance requires, are chiefly thoſe, which are enjoined by the prieſt, and may be reduced to three heads, viz. prayer, faſting, and alms-deeds. By prayer I mean all the acts of religion, that depend upon the mind; ſuch as reading books of piety and attending the divine office. Faſting regards the body, and includes deprivations of all ſorts; whatever may tend to ſubdue or to mortify the fleſh. Alms comprehend the different ways of aſſiſting and ſuccouring our neighbour, whether corporally or ſpiritually. The Almighty is, moreover, ſo indulgent and merciful, as to accept, in the light of ſatisfaction, whatever afflictions may befall us; as illneſs, affronts, perſecutions, &c. But that they may be meritorious in the ſight of God, and available to this purpoſe, they muſt be received in a ſpirit of penance, and united to the ſufferings of our Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt; through whom alone we can duly ſatisfy and make atonement for our ſins. For it is ſolely from him that our actions or ſufferings can derive any merit: it is he, that preſents them to his heavenly Father, by whom they are accepted only in conſideration

deration of his Son. Moreover, it is neceſſary, Theophilus, to make reſtitution to our neighbour for any miſchief, we may have done him; whether in his perſon, by ill-treatment; in his honor, by detraction or calumny; in his property, by theft or any other kind of injury. Nothing elſe can obtain of God the remiſſion of ſuch ſins as theſe, but a compliance with the above terms; viz. to be reconciled to our neighbour, if we have uſed him ill: to make good his reputation, if we have unfortunately hurt it: to reſtore what we have taken from him, and to compenſate the damage, that our conduct may have cauſed.

I had incurred everlaſting torments; and thou art willing, O God! to change them into temporal chaſtiſements. It depended on thee to ſentence me to a moſt tremendous puniſhment; and thou art pleaſed to ſubſtitute in it's place a gentle ſatisfaction. This mitigation is the fruit of the tortures, thou didſt endure. I accept, dear Lord! all the ſufferings, which thy juſtice may ſend me for the expiation of my ſins. I unite them to the ſatisfaction, which thou didſt offer on mount Calvary.—Deign to apply to my ſoul the merits of thy death. I will punctually perform the penance, that may be enjoined me by thy ſervant. I will bear with reſignation whatever afflictions thou mayeſt aſſign me: conſidering them as ſo many proofs of thy affectionate love, and perſuaded that thou only chaſtiſeſt me in this life, in order to ſpare in the life to come. I

will even add to them, of my own accord, ſome further mortifications, to ſupply for the defect of what may have been enjoined me in the confeſſional. Some little denials at my meals, ſome alms retrenched from my vanity, a diligence in riſing early, a punctuality in the diſcharge of my duties, all theſe ſacrifices, which cannot prejudice my health, will be acceptable to thee; and, united to thy ſufferings, will ſerve to atone for my ſins, and to ſatisfy thy juſtice.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould daily offer to God our afflictions, of whatever kind; and endeavour to bear them in a ſpirit of penance.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

ON INDULGENCES.

Whatſoever you ſhall bind on earth, it ſhall be bound in heaven: and whatſoever you ſhall looſe on earth, it ſhall be looſed alſo in heaven. Matt. xviii. 18.

WHAT we underſtand by an indulgence is the remiſſion of the temporal chaſtiſement, which, as I have already ſaid, is due to ſin, after the ſin itſelf is forgiven. An indulgence, therefore, remits neither the crime in queſtion, nor the eternal

nal puniſhment it merits. It regards the temporal infliction only, which remains to be ſuffered, notwithſtanding that the ſtain is effaced by the ſacrament. It mitigates the rigor of ſuch inflictions, or ſhortens their duration.

In former days, the diſcipline of the Church enjoined for certain crimes public penances, which laſted many years. It required the ſinner to pray much; to paſs his days in tears, and his nights in watchings; to ſleep upon the ground; to attire himſelf in ſackloth; to faſt; to give plentiful alms, and to perform other good works, of a ſimilar tendency. Theſe ancient regulations are no longer in force: but the juſtice of God is ſtill the ſame, and the guilt of ſin as deſerving of puniſhment, as in the primitive ages. It is to ſupply the deficiencies of our works of ſatisfaction that the Church, ever guided by the Spirit of God, affords us theſe indulgences; that is to ſay, that ſhe remits to her children a part of thoſe penances, to which they muſt have been ſubjected by her former inſtitutions.—This power Chriſt imparted to her, in the perſons of the Apoſtles, when he ſaid to them, as above: *Whatſoever you ſhall bind on earth, it ſhall be bound in heaven: and whatſoever you ſhall looſe on earth, it ſhall be looſed alſo in heaven.* She is poſſeſſed, therefore, of a power of inflicting chaſtiſements for the expiation of ſin; and ſhe is poſſeſſed, likewiſe of a power of remitting thoſe chaſtiſements, whenever

the honor of God and the ſpiritual welfare of her children may diſpoſe her to uſe it.

The proof of this aſſertion, which the words of Chriſt afford, is moreover confirmed by the conſtant practice of antiquity. The moſt authentic records of hiſtory, and at the head of them the ſacred writings, give us inſtances of this. St. Paul made uſe of this mitigating power in regard to the Corinthian, who had been convicted of inceſt.—He commanded that the ſinner ſhould, for a time, be cut off from the communion of the faithful; and delivered over to Satan, to be puniſhed in body, for the good of his ſoul. The criminal received this humiliation with ſuch ſentiments of repentance, that there were grounds to apprehend the exceſs of his dejection. Whereupon, the Apoſtle, in a letter, next year, remitted him the reſt of the penance enjoined; and exhorted the people of Corinth to ſtrive to conſole, and to treat him with charity; adding that, in this, he acted by the power, which he held from above: *For what I forgave, for your ſakes have I done it, in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt.* The Church had alſo regard, in the primitive ages, to the recommendations of the martyrs; and, at their interceſſion, treated ſuch ſinners, as they kindly pleaded for, with indulgence and lenity. She likewiſe ſhortened the term of the penances impoſed, in favour of thoſe, who, after beginning them with vigor, were prevented from going further, by the

appearance

appearance of a perſecution; in order to animate them to a courageous and ſteady oppoſition.

It is through the ſuperabundant merits of our Redeemer, Jeſus Chriſt, that ſhe undertakes to acquit her children of what they owe to the divine juſtice. It is from this ſource ſhe draws thoſe graces, which ſhe communicates ſo liberally. The diſtribution of that immenſe treaſure is left to her diſcretion; and ſhe divides it in the proportion, her wiſdom ſuggeſts. Sometimes, ſhe allows but a ſtated number of days or years of indulgence; that is to ſay, ſhe curtails ſo much of the duration of the penance, that her priſtine diſcipline exacted. At other times, ſhe grants a plenary indulgence; by which is meant that ſhe remits to the repenting ſinner all he might have to accompliſh of the canonical penance. Wherein obſerve that the intention of the Church is not to exonerate us from doing penance: it is rather to help us in performing it. She grants her indulgences but to thoſe, who ſtrenuouſly exert themſelves to appeaſe the divine anger. She means to make good their deficiencies, and not to countenance tepidity. And the works, ſhe propoſes, beſides atoning for paſt ſins, ſerve to guard us againſt relapſes, to moderate the paſſions, to ſubdue the fleſh; and as ſuch are indiſpenſable. By this bountiful diſpenſation of her tenderneſs and clemency, the Church endeavours to win us to the ſervice of the Deity; for which reaſon, ſhe beſtows them ſo freely throughout

the year; that, being encouraged by her readineſs to aſſiſt our exertions, we may more ardently purſue the great work of ſalvation.

Thy mercies, O God! are above my acknowledgments. Thou haſt reſcued me from the flames of hell, which my guilt had deſerved. Thou haſt done away my ſins by the ſacrament of penance: but ſtill I ſtand indebted to the claims of thy juſtice, which demands a ſatisfaction proportioned to my faults. Alas! what have I wherewith to appeaſe it? All I can offer is too inſignificant to expiate my crimes: but thou comeſt again to my aſſiſtance, and ſupplieſt graciouſly by indulgences what is wanting to my penance. From the inexhauſtible treaſury of thy merits the Church draws thoſe riches, that muſt acquit me in thy ſight. What thanks do I not owe thee for ſo many favors! It would be abuſing them, to think of being exempted from the works of ſatisfaction, becauſe thou deigneſt to diſcharge my debts. Can I then wiſh to do nothing for thy ſake, becauſe thou doſt every thing for mine. Can I be ſo ungenerous as to deſire my ſalvation on ſuch eaſy terms, when it has coſt thee ſo dearly? No; it is not juſt that the innocent ſhould ſuffer alone, and the criminal be ſpared. I am willing to ſuffer with thee, dear Lord! All I requeſt is that thou wouldſt vouchſafe to apply to me the merits of thy ſufferings, to compenſate the deficiencies and imperfections of mine.

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The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould embrace every opportunity of gaining indulgences.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

The bread, that I will give, is my fleſh—my fleſh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. John vi. 52. 56.

THE Euchariſt is a ſacrament, which truly and really contains, according to the tenets of our faith, the body and blood, the ſoul and divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, our Redeemer, under the ſpecies and appearances of bread and wine. As ſuch, it is the greateſt and the moſt auguſt of all the ſacraments. For while the others confer grace only, this puts us in poſſeſſion of the very author of grace, God himſelf. By means of the Euchariſt, the Saviour of the world reſides perſonally in us, and we in him.

Long before it's inſtitution, Chriſt had promiſed it to his Apoſtles. This promiſe we find recorded in the ſixth chapter of St. John, when, after ſaying to the Jews; *I am the living bread, who came down from heaven*, he added; *The bread that I will give*

give is my fleſh, for the life of the world: and as the Jews ſeemed diffident, and inclined to cavil at what he ſaid, he ſubjoined with greater energy; *Amen, amen, I ſay unto you, unleſs you eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you ſhall not have life in you.— He, that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* This ſame promiſe he fulfilled, the night previous to his paſſion, at the awful ſcene of his laſt ſupper; when, having taken the bread and given thanks, he broke and gave it to his diſciples, ſaying; *Take ye and eat; this is my body:* and the like ceremonies repeated with the chalice, *Drink ye all of this,* he ſaid; *for this is my blood, the blood of the new teſtament, which ſhall be ſhed for many to the remiſſion of ſins. Do ye theſe things in remembrance of me.*

The ſpecies of bread and wine, which we ſee, and which we taſte, are the viſible ſigns, that expreſs the inviſible effects of this life-giving ſacrament. They intimate that the body and blood of Chriſt are the nouriſhment of our ſouls, as bread and wine are the ſuſtenance of our bodies. But notwithſtanding that theſe appearances, ſuch as the colour and the taſte, remain unaltered, after the words of conſecration neither bread nor wine is left: for the whole ſubſtance of the bread is changed into the body, and the whole ſubſtance of the wine into the blood of Jeſus Chriſt. Inſomuch that, from that moment, it is the ſame body, as was nailed to the croſs and now reſides in heaven.

And

And as it is a living and animated body, it follows that Chriſt is wholly and entirely under each of the ſpecies, and wholly and entirely under each particle of the ſaid ſpecies. Under the ſpecies of bread, the body of Chriſt is united to his blood, to his ſoul, and to his divinity: and under the ſpecies of wine, his blood, in like manner, is united to his body, to his ſoul and to his godhead. For as Jeſus Chriſt is now immortal, he can no longer be divided.

This change is effected by the ineffable operation of the words of our Redeemer, which the prieſt pronounces, in his name and in his perſon.—It is God himſelf, that works the miracle, by the organ of his miniſter. It is he, who once changed water into wine, at the nuptial feaſt of Cana: it is he, who produced out of nothing whatever has exiſtence. It is ſurely as eaſy for him to tranſmute one ſubſtance into another, as to create, by his ſole word, the whole univerſe and it's contents We do not conceive, it is true, how the miracle is performed; but we know that *with God nothing is impoſſible*; and we believe it on the reſpectable authority of his Son, the effects of whoſe love for us exceed our comprehenſion. The Deity, no doubt, is able to operate this wonder, becauſe he is omnipotent; and he does it in fact, becauſe he informs us ſo himſelf. We bow ſubmiſſively to what he aſſerts, without vainly reaſoning on a matter ſuperior to reaſon; and without inveſtigating the laws

of

of nature, where nature is not concerned. Believe then, my dear Theophilus, believe, on the word of a God, that he is truly preſent in the Euchariſt.—Believe, in defiance of your ſenſes, that neither bread nor wine remains, after the conſecration pronounced over them. When the Deity vouchſafes to ſpeak, we are not to liſten to our ſenſes. Nothing is difficult to an infinite power. Our Saviour, to unite us intimately to himſelf, has condeſcended to become our food. He has commanded us to drink his blood, ſo plentifully ſhed for us; and to eat of the victim, that was immolated on the croſs. And, to procure us this happineſs, he has been prodigal, ſo to ſpeak, of his miraculous exertions.

How ſtupenduous are thy works, O God! Is it credible thou ſhouldſt deign to live with us, and to become our ſpiritual food! Formerly, thou gaveſt to thy people a celeſtial nouriſhment, and feddeſt them, in the deſart, with the ſtrengthening bread of Angels. At preſent, thou doſt far greater things for us. It is no longer that manna, which was ſhowered from the heavens; it is thy body, thy blood, thy divinity itſelf, which thou imparteſt to us freely. O prodigy of love, which thou alone couldſt effect, and which the comprehenſion of man is unable to fathom! But thou haſt affirmed it, who art the infallible truth, and I deſire no other aſſurance. I believe in thy word. I pierce the clouds, that envelop thee, and recogniſe my God.—I ſee in this myſtery the effects of an aſtoniſhing, of

a godlike

a godlike charity. How expreſſive the means, thou haſt choſen, to unite thyſelf to me and me to thyſelf! How admirably do they accord with the exceſs of thy love; that love, which induced thee to veſt thyſelf with our nature, and to give thy life for us! More tender than a mother, thou feedeſt them with the nutriment of thy own ſacred body and blood. May I correſpond with thy affection, by a zealous eagerneſs to receive thee. May I run to thy table with the like avidity as a child to the breaſts of her, that ſuckles him. And may it be my only affliction to be deprived of the pleaſure of thy heavenly banquet.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould adore Jeſus Chriſt, really preſent on our altars.

LECTURE LXXXV.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED FOR RECEIVING THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

The work is great; for a houſe is prepared, not for man, but for God. 1. Paralip. xxix. 1.

THE intimate union, produced by the Euchariſt, between God and us, demands, of courſe, the moſt attentive preparation. The more holy the ſacrament,

ſacrament, the greater care ſhould we take to fit ourſelves for it. Of the diſpoſitions, thereto required, ſome regard the ſoul and others the body.

The firſt diſpoſition, which relates to the ſoul, is purity of conſcience. We muſt try ourſelves, as the Apoſtle commands, before we venture to approach to this heavenly table; and, if conſcious of any mortal ſin, muſt, of neceſſity, have recourſe to the tribunal of penance. The Euchariſt preſuppoſes a ſpiritual life in thoſe, that come to receive it. None, but the living, can be benefited by aliment. It is the God of purity, that here communicates himſelf to us; and a pure heart alone can be acceptable to him. To ſignify this to them, Chriſt would waſh his diſciples feet, when he deigned firſt to feed them with his own ſacred body and blood. And to impreſs the ſame idea, the deacon, in former days, was wont audibly to pronounce, before the celebration of the myſteries: *Holy things are for the holy.* The innocence of baptiſm, either preſerved entire, or recovered by penance, is that nuptial garment, without which we are forbidden to appear at the feaſt of the great Father of nature.

This purity of conſcience then is the principal condition: but with it muſt be joined a lively faith, a firm hope and an ardent charity. Chriſt himſelf calls the Euchariſt a ſacrament of faith: and whoever approaches it, muſt believe, without heſitation, that, in receiving it, he receives Jeſus Chriſt;

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the ſame Jeſus Chriſt, as lived in this world, as died for our redemption, as roſe triumphant from the dead, and now ſits in heaven, at the right hand of his Father. A firm hope conſiſts in expecting confidently from Chriſt whatever we may aſk of him, relative to ſalvation. And, ſince he here gives us himſelf, what elſe can he refuſe us? He has declared that, *Whoever eats his body, and drinks his blood, ſhall have eternal life; and that he will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* After ſo generous a promiſe, how great ſhould be our reliance on his unqueſtionable liberality! Go then, Theophilus, to the banquet of your Saviour, with the like ſentiments of confidence, as the woman in the goſpel; *If I touch but the hem of his garment*, ſhe ſaid, I know *I ſhall be cured*; which in fact, ſhe was immediately. I need not, I think, prove that love ſhould be your guide, to conduct you to the altar. The Euchariſt is a ſacrament of love: the inſtitution of it is an effect of an incomprehenſible love. Would it not therefore be a moſt baſe ingratitude to receive it with a heart benumbed with indifference?

But this love muſt be accompanied with profound ſentiments of humility, adoration and gratefulneſs. Whom do we receive in the myſterious feaſt of the altar? God himſelf, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the univerſe; whoſe virtues are infinite, whoſe perfections unbounded. And what are we? Nothingneſs and ſin. Let us then humble ourſelves before the Deity; and, with the Centurion,

rion, acknowledge that we are not worthy to approach him.—Proſtrate at his feet, let us adore him with fear and trembling: for, though veiled under the euchariſtic ſpecies, he is no leſs our God. —Let us rouſe ourſelves to a ſenſe of gratitude, with all the ardor of our ſoul. If this ſhould be commenſurate to the magnitude of the favor, how animated ought ours to be, for a gift of infinite value!

Moreover, the body muſt contribute it's ſhare to receive properly the divine gueſt, who comes to honor it with his preſence. For this, two things are neceſſary. Firſt, we muſt be faſting, from at leaſt the midnight beforehand. This is an ancient ordinance of the Church, out of reverence to the ſacrament; from which thoſe alone are exempted, who, in a dangerous illneſs, receive it by way of *viaticum*. Secondly, we muſt be on our knees, with the greateſt poſſible modeſty and reſpectfulneſs of behaviour. This poſture of the body, and a due gravity of deportment beſpeak the feelings of a ſoul, that humbles itſelf profoundly in the preſence of the Supreme Majeſty.

O amiable Saviour! I firmly believe that thou art truly preſent in the Euchariſt, and that, when we receive it, we receive thee thyſelf. I adore thee under the ſacred ſpecies, as my Lord and my God. No, *I am not worthy thou ſhouldſt enter under my roof*. But thou commandeſt me to receive thee, and I obey with awful confidence. I have preſent-

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ed myſelf to thy miniſter, and laid my ſins at his feet. My faults are therefore effaced, by the ſentence of abſolution. But prepare me ſtill further. Sanctify this habitation, in which thou condeſcendeſt to dwell, and adorn it with all virtues. I look for every thing from thy mercy; for what canſt thou deny me, after giving me thyſelf? Yes, my God, I truſt that thou wilt cure all my maladies, and attach me to thyſelf for ever. How much ought I to love thee for ſo inconceivable a bleſſing! Can I offer to partake of it, without being melted into tenderneſs! Enkindle in my heart the divine flames of thy charity. This heart is all I can preſent to thee, in teſtimony of my gratitude. I deſire to conſecrate it to thy love, O God! and entreat thee to accept it. The ſentiments, that now actuate me, are the effects of thy kindneſs, and are inſpired by thyſelf. Preſerve them in their vigor, and never ſuffer them to be impaired.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould prepare ourſelves for communion by fervent and repeated acts of faith, hope and charity.

LECTURE LXXXVI.

ON THE EFFECTS OF THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

He, that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him: he hath everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day. John vi. 57, 55.

ADMIRABLE, Theophilus, are the effects, which the Euchariſt produces, when properly received.

The firſt of theſe effects is intimately to unite us, and even to incorporate us with Jeſus Chriſt.—Weigh well the import and the force of what I ſay. We may be united to Chriſt by faith; by believing firmly whatever he teaches. We may be united to him by charity; by loving him with all our heart. Faith captivates our underſtanding, and charity our affections to him. But there is an union ſtill more perfect; viz. that, which is produced by a participation of his body and blood: and this moſt intimate connexion is peculiar to the Euchariſt. What therefore is the reſult of our being ſo happy as to receive it? Jeſus Chriſt communicates himſelf entirely to us: he unites us to himſelf ſo cloſely, that we become the ſame body and ſoul with him. O wonderful effect of this adorable ſacrament! Should we have imagined ourſelves capable of an union ſo divine? But Chriſt himſelf aſſerts it, in the following words: *Whoever eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him.*

him. As the food, which we take, commixes with our bodies, and is tranſmuted into our ſubſtance; ſo, in the ſacrament of the Euchariſt, our body becomes that of Chriſt. For there is this diſtinctive difference, that our ordinary nouriſhment is changed into us: whereas, the holy communion transforms us into Jeſus Chriſt. Whence St. Paul; *It is no longer I, that live; it is Chriſt, that liveth in me.*

The ſecond effect of the Euchariſt is to increaſe, to ſtrengthen and to preſerve our ſpiritual life. Our Saviour, become the food of our ſouls, does not remain inactive in them. He gives freſh vigor to his grace: he confirms us in his love, and enables us to preſerve that precious treaſure with a conſtant fidelity. Hence that ſettled and ſteady virtue, which we admire in thoſe, who communicate worthily. Do you wiſh to know what ſupports ſuch a one in that exemplary piety, which edifies all, who ſee him; in that regularity of conduct, which makes him a model of imitation? It is his frequent participation of the ſacred bread of life.

A third effect of this ſacrament is to weaken the force of concupiſcence, and to moderate our paſſions. We all bring with us into the world a ſtrong propenſity to evil. This, like a poiſon, has ſpread itſelf through the whole maſs of human nature, by the ſin of our firſt parents. The Euchariſt does not entirely free us from the virulence of it's infection. But it tempers it's malignancy; and, on this account, is ſtyled an *antidote*, in the lan-

guage of the ancient fathers. This you will experience, my dear Theophilus, if you come to it with a heart, duly prepared to receive it. You will find your own ſtrength increaſe, and that of your enemy diminiſh: your temptations will neither be ſo frequent in their importunities, nor ſo violent in their aſſaults. Reſiſt, therefore, courageouſly: never ſuffer yourſelf to grow tired; and the grace of the Euchariſt will conquer your paſſions.

A fourth effect of this divine banquet is to give us a pledge of a happy eternity and a glorious reſurrection. This conſoling aſſurance we have from the mouth of Chriſt: *He, that eateth my fleſh,* he ſays, *and drinketh my blood, hath everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up, at the laſt day.* The life, imparted to the ſoul by virtue of the Euchariſt, is the commencement, and, as it were, a foretaſte of the joys of futurity. And this life will continue in us for ever, unleſs we wilfully deſtroy it. The vivifying fleſh of Jeſus Chriſt acts alſo upon our bodies. It remains in them, as the ſeed of a bliſsful immortality, that will raiſe them, in time, from the corruption of the grave, and inveſt them with the qualities reſerved for a ſtate of glory. "Yes," ſays St. Ireneus, "ſince "our Redeemer is in us, by the communication of "his fleſh, we ſhall ſurely riſe again." The preſence of his ſacred body is an indubitable earneſt of our future reſurrection to a life of endleſs happineſs.

Divine Jeſus! thou communicateſt thyſelf to man but to crown him with bleſſings. How happy am

am I to have ſuch advantages within my reach! I may then unite myſelf to thee ſo cloſely, as to become the ſame perſon with thee, to live by thy life, to breathe by thy ſpirit. Alas, O Lord! I groan under the preſſure of a miſerable body, weighed down with infirmities: but thou wilt ſanctify it by thy preſence. A perverſe inclination bends me continually to evil: but thy divine fleſh will weaken my paſſions, and empower me to ſubdue them. As the reward of my victory, thou doſt promiſe me eternal life, and give me a pledge of it in the banquet of the Euchariſt. My body, united to thine, ſhall ariſe from the tomb incorruptible and glorious. Come, then, O my God, to me; or command me to go to thee. *My heart and my fleſh have rejoiced,* in the hopes of this happy union. *For what have I in heaven, or what can I deſire on earth, but thee, my God! the God of my affections, and my portion for ever?*

The Practical Inference.

That, after communion, we ſhould pray Chriſt to impart to us the wonderful effects of this life-giving ſacrament.

LECTURE LXXXVII.

ON AN UNWORTHY COMMUNION.

You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of the devils. 1. Cor. x. 21.

THEY, who communicate in mortal ſin, receive truly, as well as others, the body and blood of Jeſus Chriſt. But they receive not the graces, that are attached to this ſacrament. On the contrary, they eat and drink their own judgment, and ſelf-cauſed damnation. Such is the expreſſion of St. Paul on this terrible ſubject. *Whoever ſhall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily*, that is, in a ſtate of ſin, *ſhall be guilty of* a crime againſt *the body and blood of Chriſt. Let a man, therefore, try himſelf; and then eat of the bread, and drink of the chalice. For he, who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own judgment; not diſcerning*, as he ought, *the body of the Lord.*

Theſe words inform us how great is the crime of an unworthy communion, and how dreadful it's conſequences. This crime is the moſt atrocious of all poſſible ſacrileges: a profanation of whatever is moſt auguſt in the ſacraments, moſt holy in religion. Other ſins are chiefly injurious to man: but this, with a bold effrontery, attacks the Deity in perſon. It profanes, in a manner the moſt outrageous, the humanity and divinity of the Son of God himſelf. It unites, as much as it can, this God of all

all holineſs with vice and iniquity, by introducing his adorable blood into veins flowing with ſin. It is a treaſon ſimilar, in perfidy, to that of the miſerable Judas. Like him, the unworthy communicant betrays his divine maſter into the hands of his moſt bitter enemies. Like him, after being favored with every mark of his affection, he violates the ſacred ties of friendſhip and gratitude. He crucifies him anew: he makes him the laughing-ſtock of his paſſions; and tramples under foot, according to the words of the ſame Apoſtle, the blood of the new covenant.

And what are the conſequences of a crime ſo enormous? I have already told you in general terms. *He, that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh his own judgment.* Ponder with attention, Theophilus, the ſenſe of that expreſſion. He, that profanes this ſacrament, eats and drinks the ſentence, that dooms him to reprobation. He incorporates it with his perſon, and renders it in ſome ſort, irreverſible and final. The food, we take, is inſeparable from our ſubſtance: it is changed into us: it becomes the ſame thing as ourſelves; ſo that it cannot be disjoined from us. In like manner, the unworthy receiver has ſwallowed his own judgment: he has, ſo to ſpeak, changed it into his habit. His condemnation is no longer written only on paper, or engraved on marble flags: it is traced on his own heart; it circulates with his blood; it attends him wherever he goes. O dreadful puniſh-

ment, which can only be inflicted by the hand of an avenging God!

Hence, it generally happens that they, who are guilty of this crime, fall into a hardneſs of heart, and a blindneſs of underſtanding, which, imperceptibly almoſt, conduct them to final impenitence. Of this we have a frightful inſtance in the perfidious Judas. Scarcely has he received the divine donation of his Redeemer, than his mind is obſcured, and his heart becomes callous. Nothing can then ſtop him. He riſes haſtily from table, and conſummates his crime. But where does his ſacrilege terminate? In deſpair, in death, in everlaſting reprobation. However, do not hence conclude, my child, that the perſon, who has been ſo unfortunate, as to make a bad communion, ought forthwith to deſpond, and to give up his ſalvation. He has yet a reſource left him: the mercy of God is infinite; and if he addreſſes himſelf to it with a contrite and humble heart, he will not be rejected. That precious blood, which he has ſo outrageouſly profaned, is ſtill able to purify him. But the inference, you ought to draw from the above reflections, is that the forgiveneſs of this crime is not to be obtained without very great difficulty; that it is but ſeldom the unworthy communicant returns fully to himſelf; and that you ſhould take every precaution to avoid a guilt ſo foul, a misfortune ſo deplorable.

I perceive, O God! the enormity of an unworthy communion. To repeat the horrors of thy crucifixion,

crucifixion, to profane thy adorable body, to trample on thy ſacred blood, to renew the treaſon of Judas and the ſavage barbarity of thy enemies; my ſoul ſhrinks at theſe ideas, and ſtands appalled with dread and terror. Is there then a Chriſtian, one that makes profeſſion of belonging to thee, who can be capable of ſuch atrocity? Can I myſelf be ſo abandoned as to think of committing it? Alas, dear Lord! preſerve me from ſo dreadful an evil. I am not ſurpriſed at the ſeverity of the puniſhment, that attends it. To eat and drink one's own damnation, how tremendous the thought! I cannot reflect upon it, without being penetrated with horror. Stop, O God! ſtop all, that preſume to receive thee unworthily. May an inviſible force prevent them from approaching thy holy altar. Inſpire me with a moſt profound reſpect for the divine banquet of the Euchariſt. Clothe me with that nuptial garment, which it is neceſſary to bring to it, and without which we merit juſtly to be caſt into exterior darkneſs. Prepare thyſelf my heart for thee, by cleanſing it from all defilements: and ſuffer me not to meet my death in the very ſource of life itſelf.—To avoid this misfortune, I will not venture to judge myſelf; for I ſhould run too great a riſk of being deluded and impoſed on. I will have recourſe to my director: I will conceal nothing from him: I will ſubmit to his deciſion, and confidently follow it.

The

The Practical Inference.

That, in regard to communion, we ſhould abide by the advice of a prudent confeſſor.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

ON FREQUENT COMMUNION.

He hath filled the hungry with good things. Luke i. 53.

THE Apoſtle, after painting in the ſtrongeſt colours the enormous guilt of a bad communion, draws not this inference from it; *Wherefore, keep at a diſtance from the ſacred table:* but he ſays; *Let a man therefore try himſelf, and then eat of the bread, and drink of the chalice.*

The apprehenſion, therefore, of receiving unworthily ought not to deter you, Theophilus, from the uſe of the communion. It ought only to engage you to examine ſeriouſly your diſpoſitions, and to redouble your vigilance, that you may be worthy to approach it often. To communicate in a ſtate of ſin is certainly a great evil; but not to communicate at all is likewiſe another rock; and either of them aſſuredly leads to death everlaſting.

The Euchariſt is neceſſary to maintain us in the ſpiritual life of grace. The ſtrength and ſpirits of the ſoul are exhauſted by degrees, as well as thoſe of the body, unleſs carefully attended to. The

reſource

reſource, left us by our Saviour to recruit this ſpiritual energy, is the table of the Euchariſt. *Unleſs you eat*, he ſays himſelf, *the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you ſhall not have life in you.* He inſtituted this ſacrament under the ſpecies of bread and wine, to give us to underſtand that we ought frequently to receive it. This myſterious bread ſhould be the uſual aliment of our ſouls, as common bread and wine are the ordinary ſuſtenance of our bodies. In the beginning of Chriſtianity, the faithful judged wiſely in regard to this matter. They conſidered the holy Euchariſt as the daily bread of God's children; and, in fact, partook of it every day, ſolely dreading to be deprived of it. Strive to adopt their ſentiments, and to imitate their fervor.

Say not that frequent communion was cuſtomary, in thoſe days; but that the diſcipline of the Church is in that reſpect altered. I freely confeſs that Chriſtians are no longer what they were, and that the ardor of charity is cooled beyond conception. But the ſpirit of the Church is the ſame; and of this I will give you a proof from the Council of Trent, not very remote from us. "The Council "could wiſh," it ſays, "that the faithful, as often "as they aſſiſt at the ſacrifice of the maſs, would "participate, not only ſpiritually, but alſo actually, "in the diſtribution of the holy Euchariſt." The Council of Rheims, held almoſt in our own days, expreſſes the like deſire in terms ſtill more declaratory. "We ſee with regret," it ſays, "that there

"are

" are thoſe, who are ſo negligent, as to communi-
" cate once a year only. For which reaſon we en-
" join all curates and ſuch, as are intruſted with
" the miniſtry of the word, to inſtruct the faithful
" duly on frequent communion, which formerly was
" in uſe, and on the wonderful fruits, it produced
" in thoſe times; and forcibly to inculcate to them
" that nothing is more likely to renew the hap-
" py days of the primitive Church, than a frequent
" participation of the bread of life."

You hear in theſe words the opinion of the Church; and you ſee that, although ſhe in rigor, exacts of her children to communicate but once a year, it is not becauſe ſhe thinks this annual communion ſufficient. She is unwilling to uſe menaces, to induce them to do it oftner; for fear of augmenting tranſgreſſions and multiplying ſacrileges. But it is her wiſh they ſhould be ſo pure, ſo irreprehenſible in their way of living, as to communicate frequently; as frequently, as may be neceſſary to ſupport, by the grace of the Euchariſt, the life and vigor of their ſouls. If you love your God, you will often unite yourſelf to him. He invites you to this ſacred banquet: deſpiſe not his kindneſs. If you love your mother, the Church, you will not ſtick at her commands: you will fulfil her intentions, and accompliſh her deſires. If you have your ſalvation at heart, you will frequently have recourſe to the table of the Euchariſt, as the moſt powerful of all means to effect what you aſpire to.

Thou

Thou doſt invite us, O God! to this banquet, in which thou feedeſt us with thyſelf. Thou deſireſt often to ſee thy children ſurrounding thy altar.—It is thy delight to dwell in them, and to enrich them with thy gifts. But they reject thy invitations. Thou calleſt them, and they fly from thee, deaf both to thy voice and to that of thy Church.—Is it fear, that is the cauſe of this unaccountable perverſeneſs? It is true thou requireſt they ſhould be properly diſpoſed, when they preſent themſelves before thee. But thy grace is fully equal to ſupply them with what they want. If they are afraid of communicating unworthily, they ſhould not be leſs apprehenſive of neglecting to receive thee, and of periſhing for want of ſuſtenance. Alas! it is not fear, O Lord! that reſtrains me; it is the coolneſs of my love. If I loved thee, as I ought, I ſhould eaſily renounce whatever renders me unworthy.—If I loved thee, as I ought, I ſhould ſpare no pains to fit myſelf to come to thee frequently. Give me this divine love, then; and nothing further will prevent me from attending thy table. Enkindle it in my boſom; and my ſoul will pant after thee, as the ſtag after the living and refreſhing waters of the ſtream. My greateſt conſolation will then be to receive thee into my breaſt: my greateſt miſery to be ſecluded from the participation of that happineſs.

The

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould conſider the holy communion as indiſpenſable to our welfare.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

ON THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

From the riſing of the ſun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles: and, in every place, there is offered to my name a ſacrifice and a clean oblation. Malac. i. 11.

THE Euchariſt is not only *a ſacrament*, in which Chriſt imparts himſelf to us, to be the food of our ſouls: it is alſo *a ſacrifice*, in which he preſents himſelf to his Father, as the victim of our reconcilement. And for this purpoſe, he was not ſatisfied with offering himſelf once on the altar of the croſs: but deſirous, moreover, to leave us a ſacrifice, that might perpetuate, to the end of time, the remembrance of that firſt oblation, and apply it's merits to us, at his laſt ſupper, the very night on which he was betrayed, he preſented to God, the Father, his body and his blood, under the ſpecies of bread and wine: he gave them to his Apoſtles, whom he then appointed the prieſts of the new covenant;

covenant; and by thoſe words, *Do ye this in remembrance of me*, he commanded them and their ſucceſſors, to offer them in like manner. This the Catholic Church has uniformly taught and univerſally practiſed.

This ſacrifice is then the ſame as the ſacrifice of the croſs, of which it is a daily continuation.—Chriſt is preſent on the altar under the appearance of a victim, under the ſemblance of death. Though alive and glorious, he there appears to be immolated; inaſmuch as, by the words of conſecration, his body ſeems ſeparated and disjoined from his blood. And this diſunion of the ſpecies is a lively repreſentation of that violent death, which he ſuffered in our behalf. Thus, it is the ſame victim and the ſame offerer on the altar, as on the croſs.—The ſole difference is in the manner. On the croſs, he was his own offerer; whereas, in the maſs, he is offered by the miniſtry of his prieſts; on the croſs, his ſacrifice was ſtained with blood; in the maſs it is untinged and perfectly ſpotleſs.

Such is the auguſt ſacrifice of our religion; a ſacrifice worthy of the promiſed covenant; and which unites in itſelf, in fact, all the advantages the ancient ſacrifices, ſo numerous and different, repreſented only in figure. It is, at once, a ſacrifice of *Adoration*, by which we acknowledge the authority and ſovereign dominion of the Deity; a ſacrifice of *Thankſgiving*, by which we praiſe him for his mercies; a ſacrifice of *Impetration*, by which

we

we obtain additional favors of him, and a ſacrifice of *Propitiation*, by which we appeaſe his anger and deprecate his juſtice. It cannot be doubted but the oblation, which Chriſt makes of himſelf to his Father, is the moſt ſublime act of homage, that can be rendered to his infinite Majeſty; and diſpoſes him to regard us with an eye of clemency and indulgence; in exhibiting to him the cruel death, to which his beloved ſon was pleaſed to ſubmit for the reconciliation of ſinners.

Inſtructed, as you are, Theophilus, on the myſtery of the bleſſed Euchariſt; convinced that Jeſus Chriſt is really preſent on the altar, and that he there renews and perpetuates the memory of his paſſion, with what devotion and gratitude ſhould you not aſſiſt at this grand ſacrifice! Had you been preſent at his death and immolation on mount Calvary, what would have been your ſentiments? Would you not have been penetrated with grief, with compunction and with love at ſo affecting a ſight? But ſince the ſacrifice of the maſs is the ſame as that of the croſs, you ought to experience the like feelings. You ſhould be careful to join with the prieſt, and to unite your intentions to his. He offers up this ſacrifice with a view to render to the Deity that tribute of adoration, which is due to him alone; to return him thanks for favors received, to ſolicit the addition of ſuch as may be ſtill further neceſſary, and to implore the forgiveneſs and remiſſion of all ſin.

And

And, obſerve, my child, that ſacrifice is offered only to the Supreme Being; becauſe it is a teſtimony of our ſubmiſſion and dependance upon him.—We but commemorate the Saints, in order to thank the Almighty for the laurels, which his grace has enabled them to gain; for the glory, with which he has crowned them, and to beg them to join their prayers with ours, for the attainment of our wiſhes. This ſacrifice is offered not only for the living, who are ſtill amenable to the divine bar; but alſo for the dead, who have already completed their mortal race: for ſuch, I ſay, among them as have died in a ſtate of grace, but yet have to atone for the relics of paſt tranſgreſſions. For theſe the Church begs, through the merits of this ſacrifice, the diminution of their ſufferings and their admittance into heaven. Which cuſtom of offering the holy victim in behalf of the faithful departed is of primitive antiquity and apoſtolical tradition.

To have ſacrificed thy life for us on the tree of the croſs was inadequate, O God! to the extent of thy love. Thou wouldſt alſo have this ſacrifice to be daily renewed among us, that we might participate in it's merits. Can my heart be equal to the various ſentiments, which a gift ſo ineffable, a ſacrifice ſo holy, ſo excellent and ſo efficacious demand of it's feelings? I will correſpond with thy affection, and fit myſelf for the bleſſings, which thou there diſpenſeſt to thy ſervants. I will aſſiſt at the maſs as often, and with as much devotion, as I can.—

On entering thy ſanctuary, I will look upon the altar as another mount Calvary. I will there keep myſelf in a poſture, expreſſive of my reſpect; ſedulouſly avoiding whatever may diſtract me, or turn my attention from the ſanctity of the myſteries. I will unite my intentions with thoſe of thy miniſter, viz. to adore thy Sovereign Majeſty, to thank thee for paſt favors, to ſupplicate thy further aid and to ſatisfy thy juſtice. At the elevation, I will make acts of faith, of hope and of adoration. At the communion, I will aſpire after thee; I will long to be united to thee; and will form the reſolution to get myſelf in readineſs to receive thee, as ſoon as poſſible.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould attend the holy ſacrifice in the ſincereſt ſentiments of piety.

LECTURE

LECTURE XC.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF EXTREME-UNCTION.

Is any one ſick among you? Let him call in the prieſts of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith ſhall ſave the ſick man; and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up: and, if he be in ſins, they ſhall be forgiven him. James v. 14, 15.

THE infinite goodneſs of our God has not only ſupplied us with every ſalutary aid through the courſe of life, and under the enjoyment of health; it has, moreover, inſtituted a ſacrament, to conſole us in the time of illneſs, and particularly at the hour of death, when our enemy is the moſt buſy, and temptation the moſt dangerous. This ſacrament is called *Extreme-unction*; inaſmuch as it is the laſt ſacred unction, the Chriſtian receives.—The firſt of theſe is given us at baptiſm; the ſecond, at confirmation; and this final one, at the approach of death.

Chriſt eſtabliſhed this ſacrament as well for the corporal, as for the ſpiritual relief of the ſick.—And the advantages, attending it, St. James explains at large, in the terms above recited: *Is any one ſick? &c.* From which words it appears that two things are eſſential to the nature of this ſacrament, viz. unction and prayer. The unction is per-

formed with oil of olives, which is conſecrated for this purpoſe by the biſhop, on Maunday Thurſday. And this holy oil is applied to each of the principal organs of the ſenſes, to purify it from the ſins, of which it may have been occaſionally the inſtrument. The prayer, that accompanies this unction, is this; *May the Lord, by this ſacred unction and the effect of his moſt tender mercy, forgive thee whatever ſins, thou haſt committed by thy ſight*; and ſo as to all the other ſenſes. A powerful and efficacious prayer; which our Redeemer has promiſed, by the mouth of his Apoſtle, that he will at all times attend to.

There are three principal effects peculiar to this ſacrament; the firſt of which is to give ſtrength to the ſick againſt the temptations of the devil and the horrors of death. By confirming their faith and their confidence in God, it fortifies their mind againſt the aſſaults of their potent adverſary: and by inflaming their deſire and hope of poſſeſſing God, it animates them againſt the terrors of death and the dread of diſſolution. The more ardent this deſire and the firmer the hope, the leſs, in proportion, is the apprehenſion of dying.

The ſecond effect of extreme-unction is to do away the relics of ſin, and the ſins themſelves, if any remain to be expiated. For which reaſon, by the fathers of the Church it is frequently ſtyled the perfection or the complement of penance. By the relics of ſin I mean a weakneſs and languor, that adhere to the ſoul after the pardon of the ſin itſelf,

by

by which it is ſtill attached to the things of the earth, with little reliſh for thoſe of heaven. This ſpiritual faintneſs, as I may call it, is removed by extreme-unction, which diſengages us from the world and elevates us to higher proſpects. It alſo remits our venial, and even ſuch of our mortal ſins, as we may have accidentally overlooked, or may at that time be unable to confeſs: provided, however, that we be truly and ſincerely ſorry for them. But we ought previouſly, if poſſible, to have recourſe to confeſſion; for extreme-unction is a ſacrament of the living, and of conſequence ſhould be received in a ſtate of grace.

Finally, the laſt effect of extreme-unction is to reſtore health to the body, if expedient to ſalvation. A perſon ſhould not wait, therefore, till he be brought to the verge of death. It is not a time to pray for health, when ready to breathe the expiring gaſp. It would be tempting God ſo to do; becauſe a miracle alone could, in that caſe, reeſtabliſh us. To receive extreme-unction, it is ſufficient to be dangerouſly ill; and ſuch, as demand it, while their judgment is yet ſound and their faculties unimpaired, will both be better diſpoſed for it, and reap greater benefit. Beſides, by deferring it to the laſt moment, one runs no ſmall riſk of dying without it: for it too often happens that they, who thus delay and procraſtinate, are prevented by death from enjoying this laſt comfort. And although this ſacrament be not of abſolute neceſſity,

yet it is incumbent to receive it, when circumſtances permit. It is the ordinary channel, through which to obtain the grace of a good and pious death. To neglect it is diſobeying the orders of Chriſt: it is voluntarily depriving ourſelves of the advantages annexed to it, and incurring the danger of that greateſt of all misfortunes, the unhappineſs of dying ill.

I return thee thanks, O my God! for having prepared for us, by the ſacrament of extreme-unction, the moſt effectual ſuccours for that critical moment, which muſt decide our eternity. The enemy of our ſalvation then redoubles his efforts: but thou alſo redoubleſt thy benevolent aſſiſtance, in proportion to the peril. Thou doſt ſtrengthen us againſt his fierce attacks at the approach of diſſolution. How kind art thou, O Lord! to take ſo much care of us, and to furniſh us with arms at the moſt hazardous criſis, that befalls us on earth! Thou diſplayeſt thy mercy, at the very time when we appear to be given over to thy juſtice. Let me not be deprived of this conſolatory ſacrament at the hour of my departure. I will neglect none of the means, thy paternal goodneſs has provided; but will ſtrive to merit this favor by a truly chriſtian life. I entreat thee even now, to grant me in thoſe moments that ſpirit of compunction, which ought to accompany this holy rite.—Let me not appear in thy preſence, till I ſhall have done my beſt to prepare myſelf ſuitably; that, dying in thy embraces, I may live with thee for ever.

The

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould reſolve to call for the ſacraments betimes; when under the viſitation of ſickneſs.

LECTURE XCI.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY-ORDER.

The Holy-Ghoſt ſaid to them: Separate Saul and Barnabas, for the work, whereunto I have taken them. Then impoſing their hands on them, they ſent them away. Acts xiii. 2, 3.

THE five foregoing ſacraments are common to all Chriſtians; and all ought to receive them, whenever the aid, afforded by them, becomes eſſential to their well-being. The two following are peculiar to two particular ſtates of life, which, on account of their importance and the obligations attending them, need a more powerful aſſiſtance.

The ſacrament of Order ſupplies the Church with miniſters for her direction and government.—Impoſition of hands and the efficacy of prayer are the means made uſe of to confer this diſtinction on them. By the union of theſe means, they are ſeparated, as I may ſay, from the reſt of the faithful, and veſted with the authority of preaching the Goſpel, of adminiſtering the ſacraments, of offering the holy

victim, and, to include all in one word, of ſerving the altar. This ſacrament Chriſt inſtituted, when he ſaid to his Apoſtles; *Even as the Father hath ſent me, ſo do I ſend you. Go, and teach all nations, baptiſing them. Receive ye the Holy-Ghoſt; whoſe ſins you ſhall forgive, they are forgiven them, &c.* And again when, after eſtabliſhing the ſacrifice of his body and blood, he ſubjoined, *Do ye this in remembrance of me.* Holy-order is therefore a ſacrament, which gives the power to perform the eccleſiaſtical functions, and the grace to perform them well. Neither did the Apoſtles receive this divine power merely for themſelves. They were to impart it to others; and, in conſequence thereof, we ſee them, in the Scripture, ordaining biſhops, prieſts and deacons, by the impoſition of hands: and we read in the annals of the primitive Church that the biſhops, conſtituted by the Apoſtles, ordained others, in like manner; and this ſucceſſion, which never has been interrupted, will perpetuate the ſacred hierarchy till the expiration of time.

Although there be a diverſity of degrees, yet there is but one ſacrament of holy-order, which is that of the prieſthood; and which is more or leſs communicated, according to the rank and elevation of each particular miniſter. The tonſure, which gives admiſſion to the eccleſiaſtical ſtate, is not an order; it is but a ceremony, that precedes and diſpoſes for the orders to follow. The perſon, thus ſelected, declares that he takes God for his portion,

portion, and that he devotes himſelf to his ſervice and to that of his Church. A ſtate of life ſo pure requires extraordinary endowments in ſuch, as are candidates for it. The firſt of which is to be called, and not to thruſt oneſelf into it. If there be no ſtate, in embracing which we are not previouſly obligated to conſult the will of God, how much more neceſſary is this precaution in one, where the duties are ſo holy, the functions ſo ſublime? *Let no one*, ſays St. Paul, *preſume to uſurp this honor, which belongs only to them, that are called to it by God.* Jeſus Chriſt choſe his Apoſtles; they did not obtrude themſelves upon him. *You did not chooſe me*, he ſays to them, *but it was I that choſe you, to go, and*, by your labors, *to bring forth fruit.* And ſo convinced were they of the neceſſity of this divine vocation, that they addreſſed themſelves to heaven, to be thence informed whom it deſtined to replace the treacherous Judas. *Thou, O Lord! who knoweſt the hearts of all, ſhew which thou haſt choſen to execute this miniſtry.*

But you will ſay, perhaps, Theophilus; how ſhall I know whether God calls me, or not, to the eccleſiaſtical ſtate? You will know it, if you frequently entreat the Almighty to ſhew you the way, he would have you to take; if you apply to ſome diſcreet and intelligent perſon, to whom you can freely unboſom yourſelf, and whoſe advice you can cordially and ſubmiſſively follow. Another diſpoſition to enter into this holy ſtate is to be animated with

zeal

zeal for the honor of God and the ſalvation of our neighbour. But wo to ſuch, as intrude themſelves into the ſacred miniſtry, with no other views, than thoſe of intereſt or ambition; views utterly repugnant to the ſanctity of their profeſſion, and to the humility of their Maſter. Again, they, that aſpire to holy-orders, ſhould be irreproachable as to their morals: fortunate, if ſtill in poſſeſſion of their baptiſmal innocence; but, at leaſt, this ought long before to be recovered, and their lives, at the time, to be blameleſs and exemplary. Laſtly, a ſtate of grace is requiſite in whoever preſents himſelf for the ordination of the Church. To receive a ſacrament ſo pure, under the guilt of mortal ſin, would be a moſt atrocious crime, a moſt horrible ſacrilege.

Happy, O God! is the man, whom thou haſt graciouſly ſelected for the ſervice of thy altar! He ſhall dwell in thy tabernacles, under the cover of thy wings. He ſhall be preſerved from the contagion of an infected world; and thou wilt bleſs him with the plenitude of thy celeſtial benedictions.—But theſe advantages are reſerved for thoſe only, whom thou calleſt to this dignity. Wo, therefore, to him, who ſhall intrude himſelf: wo to him, who ſhall embrace this ſtate on motives temporal and human. Such a one will not find therein that grace, which is ſo abſolutely neceſſary to the diſcharge of the ſacred functions; he will meet with nothing but ſnares and dangers, that will involve him in eternal ruin. O my God! diſcover thy intentions

tentions to me. My deſtiny is in thy hands. It belongs to thee alone to diſpoſe of me, and to mark out my ſtation. My heart is ready to obey thee: if thou wiſheſt me to enter into the eccleſiaſtical ſtate, give me the requiſite virtues, and render me worthy of thy choice: if otherwiſe; permit me not, O Lord! to be ſo preſumptuouſly raſh, as to embrace it againſt thy will: nor let any human conſideration determine me, to a ſtep, which thy wiſdom prohibits: for thou art to be obeyed, in preference to man.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould conſult a prudent director on the choice of a ſtate of life.

LECTURE XCII.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY.

This ſacrament is great: I ſpeak in Chriſt and in the Church. Epheſ. v. 32.

THE inſtitution of Matrimony is coeval with the world; for, immediately on man's creation, God brought to him the woman, whom he had formed out of one of his ribs, for a friendly aſſociate; and, by a particular bleſſing, endued them with fruitfulneſs. And, to render this union more

more reſpectable and holy, Chriſt raiſed it, in the new law, to the dignity of a ſacrament; by annexing to it a peculiar grace, to ſanctify ſuch, as engage in it, and to aid them in the diſcharge of it's weighty obligations. He has made it the ſymbol of a venerable myſtery; his intimate and everlaſting union with his ſpouſe, the Church. Hence matrimony is become a ſource of ſpiritual advantages, when embraced with the diſpoſitions, which it's dignity requires. Thus ſpeaks the Council of Trent, upon the authority of the Scripture.— "Chriſtian matrimony being more excellent than "that of the Jewiſh law, on account of the grace, "which it confers through Jeſus Chriſt, with rea- "ſon has it ever been the doctrine of the fathers, "of the councils and of univerſal tradition that it "ſhould be ranked among the ſacraments of the "covenant of grace." Matrimony therefore is a ſacrament, which legitimates and ſanctifies the commerce between the ſexes. It is certain that thoſe, who marry, after conſulting the will of heaven, and with views becoming Chriſtians, receive, through this holy rite, that ſupport of heavenly grace, which enables them to fulfil the obligations of the ſtate.

There are three principal diſpoſitions required for this ſacrament. The firſt of theſe is a pure conſcience and a total cleanneſs from mortal ſin; for, being again a ſacrament of the living, it previouſly ſuppoſes in ſuch, as wiſh to partake of it, a ſpiritual life of grace. The Council of Trent even exhorts

horts them to repair beforehand to the ſacred table; thence to draw the bleſſing of God on themſelves and their undertaking. A ſecond diſpoſition is to be actuated by a deſire of doing the will of God, and of ſerving him in this ſtate. It is a principle, we ſhould never loſe ſight of, that our intention in all our actions, even the moſt common and ordinary, ſhould be directed to pleaſe the Deity. With how much more reaſon ſhould this intention influence us in an engagement for life? *We are the children of God's inheritance,* ſaid the younger Toby to his wife; *we ought not to marry, therefore, like heathens, who are ignorant of his ſanctity.* Remember, then, Theophilus, that whoever thinks himſelf called to the ſtate of chriſtian wedlock, ſhould have no other view in embracing it, than that of ſanctifying himſelf in it and of diſcharging it's duties. Finally, the laſt diſpoſition requiſite is to receive this ſacrament with decency, with modeſty and with other ſuitable virtues; carefully avoiding whatever may offend againſt the rules of decorum. To receive the nuptial benediction with an exterior inconſiſtent with the dictates of modeſty, would be inſulting the Deity, even in the face of his temple, and profaning a ſacrament, which ſhould not be aſpired to but in a ſpirit of religion.

As for the obligations of the married ſtate, they are four; viz. mutual affection, mutual fidelity, mutual aſſiſtance and the common care of their offspring. To the three firſt of theſe duties they

they reciprocally pledge their faith, at the foot of the altar. The laſt of them is the very deſign and intention of marriage; namely, to ſtock the Church with ſubjects and heaven with Saints. For this purpoſe, it is incumbent on them to attend to their children's inſtruction, to make them acquainted with their prayers and the principles of religion; to keep an eye upon their conduct, and to preſerve them from danger; and, above all, to lead them, by their own example, in the path of virtue, with unwearied attention.

O God! As to it's origin, the conjugal union is holy, ſince thou thyſelf art the author of it. But how greatly is that ſanctity augmented by the grace, which thou haſt annexed to it, in making it a ſacrament! Thou didſt honor with thy preſence the nuptials of Cana: thou didſt even deign to favor that ceremony with the very firſt of thy miracles; thereby ſanctifying a connexion, which had it's beginning with the world. Make all, that are called to it, deſerving of the grace, which thy mercy deſigns them; that they may not think of engaging in it but by the direction of thy ſpirit and according to the rules of the Church, with virtuous intentions and a due previous preparation. Enable them, by thy aid, to fulfil it's obligations; that thy love may be the principle and the baſis of their union; thy glory the end, and their own ſalvation the fruit of it.

The

The Practical Inference.

That it ſhould be remembered that wedlock is a holy ſtate; and that the happineſs of the next life, as well as of this, depends on the manner, in which it is engaged in.

LECTURE XCIII.

ON PRAYER.

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER.

Be inſtant in prayer, watching in it. Coloſs. iv. 2.

PRAYER is another reſource of religion and a copious fountain of grace. It is an elevation of the mind and of the heart to God, to lay before him our neceſſities: it is the feeling of a ſoul, conſcious of it's miſery, which addreſſes itſelf to the author and ſource of all good, to ſolicit his commiſeration in behalf of it's indigence.

Prayer is an indiſpenſable duty, and ſuch as cannot be omitted without the imputation of ſin.—In regard to the practice of it, the command of Chriſt is explicit, and frequently repeated. *Watch*, he ſays, *and pray. Pray always, and faint not.*—Hence that reproach to his diſciples; *Hitherto, you have*

have aſked nothing in my name; aſk and you ſhall receive. What he recommended in words, he enforced by example. Whole nights did he ſpend in prayer: or to ſpeak more correctly, his life was one continued act of this important occupation. Not that he needed to pray for himſelf: but he would ſhew us what we ought to do, and engage us, by his own practice, to a ſtrict obſervance of this duty. It was neceſſary that he ſhould pray for us, to make us ſenſible of our obligation of praying for ourſelves. "Learn," ſays St. Ambroſe, "what is required at "your hands; when your Saviour paſſed entire "nights in praying, and in ſupplicating for you "every neceſſary grace." Salvation is promiſed but to prayer. Salvation is not attainable but through the medium of prayer. Salvation is granted but to perſeverance in prayer.

This holy exerciſe of prayer is then of abſolute neceſſity: and though it had not been poſitively enjoined us to pray, and to pray without ceaſing, yet the ſenſe of our miſery would be ſufficient to compel us to it. Caſt, my dear Theophilus, a paſſing glance upon yourſelf. Do not the hourly ſucceeding wants of both your body and your ſoul admoniſh you to apply continually to him, who alone is able to relieve them? Is it not the part of the diſtreſſed to ſolicit help and aſſiſtance? Would the beggar leave off petitioning, while he could thereby get what he wanted? Our poverty is extreme; and the things, we need, are of infinite value.

value. God is ready to grant them; and not only does he permit, but he commands us even to aſk for them. Not that our wants are unknown to him; for he is better acquainted with them than we are ourſelves: but he will have us expoſe them to him; in order to make us more deſirous of his gracious donations, and to render us, by this deſire, ſtill more worthy of receiving them. The deſire of the gifts of heaven is enkindled by prayer; and the more ardent this deſire, the greater the divine liberality. For God *fills the hungry, and ſends the rich away empty*, who ſuppoſe they want nothing. His intention in ſo doing is to make us ſenſible of our dependance, and to keep us truly humble. Was he to beſtow his favors on us without waiting to be entreated, we ſhould be inclined, from our natural preſumption, to attribute them to ourſelves. But when, convinced of our wretchedneſs, we have recourſe to him, we cannot but acknowledge our own inſufficiency; and that, whatever he gives us, is the effect of his ſole bounty. This humble avowal of our neceſſitous inability, above all things, moves him to ſhower his bleſſings on us.

You here ſee the wiſe reaſons of the Deity, for exacting us to pray inceſſantly. Study therefore diligently to fulfil this obligation: and do not imagine that, to diſcharge a duty ſo eſſential, it is ſufficient to devote a few haſty moments to it, and that you are at liberty, for the reſt of your time, to lay aſide all thoughts of God. So far from this,

you muſt have recourſe to prayer frequently, and perſevere therein. The Almighty will have us ſolicit, preſs, importune him; he is never tired of hearing us: the fund of his grace is inexhauſtible; and we cannot pleaſe him better than by continually beſeeching him to relieve us out of it's ſtores. A potentate of the earth does not allow all ranks of people, indiſcriminately, to converſe with him: his favorites alone, and that at certain times only, are indulged in this liberty. But the king of heaven permits us to ſpeak with him, whenever we chooſe, to repreſent our wants to him, and to ſupplicate his aid: he even commands us ſo to do, and is diſpleaſed if we neglect it. What an honor for a vile creature to be admitted into the preſence of his God, to communicate to him his thoughts, his concerns, his deſires, and this with the moſt unreſerved freedom, with the beſt grounded confidence! Would it not be flighting his kindneſs to omit making uſe of his gracious condeſcenſion?

To whom, O God! ſhall I apply, under the preſſure of my wants, but to thee, the ſource and origin of every thing deſirable? Who, but thou, can eaſe my ſufferings, and ſuſtain me in the day of battle? Encompaſſed with dangers, convulſed by impetuous paſſions, I feel ſenſibly my nothingneſs and my total inability to extricate, or help myſelf. But thou enjoineſt me to run to thee, to lay before thee my weakneſs, to invoke thy aſſiſtance, I am allowed then, duſt and aſhes as I am, to ſpeak to

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thee with aſſurance to open my diſtreſſes to thee, and to depoſit in thy paternal boſom all my troubles and afflictions. Grant me, O Lord! the grace of prayer; fill my breaſt thyſelf with thoſe ardent deſires, which never fail to aſcend to the throne of thy mercy. Yes, my God! when I addreſs myſelf to thee with the confidence of a child, thy ear is attentive to the voice of my ſupplication: thou heareſt my cries; thou beholdeſt my tears; thy tender heart melts, and thou replieſt interiorly: "Take courage; I will be thy ſtrength; with me "thou canſt do every thing." Peace and joy follow inſtantly, and I exclaim with tranſport: "For ever "bleſſed be thy name, O Lord! for having ſo cloſely "interwoven my duty and intereſt".

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould accuſtom ourſelves, by frequent practice, to raiſe our minds to God.

LECTURE XCIV.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

Whatever you aſk, when you pray, believe that you ſhall receive, and it ſhall come unto you. Mark xi. 24.

ALL things are promiſed to prayer, when duly performed; an aſſertion reiterated in almoſt every page of the Scripture; and, in reſpect to which, the word of Chriſt is explicit. *Aſk, and you ſhall receive; ſeek, and you ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened to you.* Nor is he ſatisfied with ſimply telling us that prayer, when accompanied with proper diſpoſitions, is ſure to be heared, he even affirms it with an oath: *Amen, amen, I ſay to you, whatever you ſhall aſk the Father, in my name, he will give it to you.* In fine, to diſpel every doubt, he ſubjoins this proof, which is ſufficient to encourage the moſt diſheartened and downcaſt: *Does a father give a ſtone to his ſon, when he petitions him for bread; and if he aſks him for fiſh, does he offer him a ſerpent? If, then, you, bad as you are,* in other regards, *know how to adminiſter good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father impart his bleſſings to ſuch, as requeſt them,* in a proper manner?

After an aſſurance ſo poſitive, ſo firm, ſo preciſe, to doubt of the virtue and efficacy of prayer, one muſt have bid adieu to faith. If we truſt to the promiſes of a perſon of credit, with how much greater

greater reaſon ought we to rely on the aſſeveration and oath of Jeſus Chriſt? To admit a glimpſe of diſtruſt, would be doing him an injury. But whence can ariſe this diffidence? From our own unworthineſs, do you ſay? But is not the goodneſs of God towards us entirely gratuitous? And is not this very unworthineſs a claim upon a mercy, which the moſt grievous crimes cannot exhauſt, and which invites the greateſt ſinners to fly to it with confidence? Do we not pray in the name of Chriſt; and is not our unworthineſs ſcreened under the ſhelter of his infinite merits? No, never was the petition of the humbled ſinner rejected: It pierces the clouds; it reaches the throne of God, and infallibly draws a look of pity on him, that preſents it. *Who*, ſays Iſaias, *ever invoked the name of the Lord, and was deſpiſed? Our fathers called upon him, and were liberated: they hoped in him, and were not confounded: Whoever ſhall invoke the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved.* This firm and unlimited confidence is an act of tribute to the Deity: it is an homage rendered to his power, to his mercy, to his indubitable fidelity: it obtains every thing of God: he refuſes nothing to it.

Do you deſire an example, Theophilus, of the mighty efficacy, or, to uſe the expreſſion of one of the fathers, of the omnipotence of prayer? The holy pages afford us many. Moſes prays upon the mountain, and the enemies of God's people are routed. Judith prays, and her country is reſcued.

cued. Ezechiah prays, and the ſentence of death, pronounced againſt him, is revoked. The publican prays in the temple, and he comes away juſtified. Magdalene prays, and her ſins are forgiven her. The thief on the croſs prays, and, though ſtained with the guilt of the moſt atrocious crimes, he obtains their remiſſion. Hence St. John: *We have confidence towards God; becauſe whatever we ſhall aſk, according to his will, he heareth us. And we know that he heareth us, as to whatever we aſk, becauſe we already have the fruits of the petitions, we requeſt of him.*

No longer then alledge your weakneſs, when exhorted to virtue: no more plead the bent of your evil inclinations, or the impetuoſity of your paſſions. You may pray; and prayer will ſuſtain your weakneſs: You may pray; and prayer will give you ſtrength againſt your perverſe inclinations: You may pray; and prayer will attemperate the violence of your paſſions. You ſtand in need of aſſiſtance for the regulation of your conduct. Implore the aid of God, and he will grant it: *If any of you want wiſdom,* St. James ſays, *let him aſk it of God, who giveth it to all abundantly.* We never fail then to obtain of the Almighty what we ſolicit of him properly; and if we obtain it not, it is always our own fault; it is for want of that firm reliance which at all times ſucceeds with him.

Never, O God! does a hearty prayer come in vain into thy preſence. Thou ever lendeſt a favorable ear to the cry, that invokes thee; and we are

ſure

ſure of being heared, if we but addreſs thee with confidence. Herein is my truſt, my ſupport, my conſolation. I am weak, but by praying I may become ſtrong. My enemy is powerful: but, if I pray as I ought, I ſhall have nothing to fear from him. I am deſirous to get the better of a temptation, that moleſts me: if I ſupplicate thee fervently, thou wilt either free me from it, or give me the ſtrength to combat it with advantage. That thou wilt come to my help is what I cannot call in queſtion. But what I apprehend is that I may neglect to apply to thee: however, I hope to be more prudent. Yes, dear Lord! Under all my trials, I will caſt myſelf into the arms of thy compaſſionate mercy, and in this aſylum I ſhall be ſecure. Thou wilt cover me, as with a ſhield; and thy almighty hand will blunt the poiſoned arrows of my foes.

The Practical Inference.

That we may expect every thing from God, if we implore his aid with confidence.

LECTURE XCV.

THE CONDITIONS OF PRAYER.

Curſed is he, that doth the work of the Lord negligently. Jerem. xlviii. 10.

THE ſucceſs of prayer depends upon the manner, in which it is performed. To pray well, we muſt, in the firſt place, offer our petitions in the name and through the merits of Chriſt. He has promiſed to grant whatever we may ſolicit in virtue of his ſacred name: *Whatever you ſhall aſk the Father in my name, I will do.* For which reaſon the Church concludes all her addreſſes, in this uniform method, *Through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, &c.* Secondly, we muſt pray with attention: that is, we muſt think of God, and of what we are aſking for. Prayer is an elevation of the mind to God. Wherefore, to be occupied, at that time, with thoughts foreign to the purpoſe is not praying. It is true that involuntary diſtractions do not deſtroy the effect of prayer: but ſuch, as we give occaſion to through our own fault, or do not reject as ſoon as perceived, are offenſive to the Deity. They merit that reproach, which God made formerly to the Jews; *This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Beware of drawing the like cenſure on your own head, Theophilus. How can you expect God ſhould attend to you, when you attend not to yourſelf? Were you ſpeaking to a prince,

you

you would, doubtleſs, mind what you were ſaying: with how much more reaſon ought you to be attentive, when addreſſing the Almighty! Thirdly, we muſt pray with confidence. In promiſing to hear our ſupplications, Chriſt always adds this condition, that they be made with faith. *Believe that you ſhall receive, and it ſhall come unto you.* And his uſual reply to thoſe, who came to him for relief, was; *Be it done to thee, according to thy faith.* St. James, while he recommends confidence in prayer, decidedly reprobates every degree of heſitation.—*He, that doubteth, is like a wave of the ſea,* he ſays, *which is toſſed about by the wind. Let not that man think he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord.*

Our reliance, indeed, on God can never be too great; ſince it is grounded upon his power, which is infinitely more than adequate to whatever we may have to aſk for; upon his mercy, which knows no limits; and upon the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe holy name we pray. What then! In our temporal emergencies, can we apply, without heſitation, to a rich and tried friend, and yet want this firm confidence, when we addreſs ourſelves to God, under our ſpiritual neceſſities; although he invites, and even commands us to have recourſe to him, as to a parent? How injurious ſuch a diffidence! For what is human kindneſs, comparatively with that of the Deity? Wherefore, let your truſt in him be uncircumſcribed, and the divine mercy will be ſo likewiſe.

Finally,

Finally, we muſt pray with perſeverance.—The Almighty, from motives of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, ſometimes defers granting what we earneſtly ſue for. But this delay is not a refuſal: it is rather a trial of our conſtancy. He means thereby to make us ſenſible of the value of his gifts, to inflame our deſires and to fit us to receive them more abundantly, at his own time. We ought never to be diſcouraged, or tired with praying. So Jeſus Chriſt commands: and to give us a juſt idea of the neceſſity of perſeverance, he makes uſe of two compariſons: The firſt is that of a widow, who by her importunities, ſucceeds at laſt in moving the heart of an obdurate judge, and perſuades him to do her juſtice: the ſecond that of a man, who, in the dead of night, goes to his friend to beg ſome loaves: the latter refuſes to riſe; but the former, not diſheartened, continues to knock at the door, and redoubles his entreaties: his perſeverance is at length rewarded, and he obtains his requeſt. Our Lord concludes this parable by a ſtrong and preſſing exhortation to pray without ceaſing, and by a formal promiſe to grant whatever we aſk with perſeverance. Taught by theſe examples, and encouraged by this aſſurance, you ſhould never deſpond. The very moment, you deſiſt from praying, may poſſibly be that, in which your petition would have been granted, had you continued your endeavours. Remember this obſervation;

vation: it is prayer, that aſks; but it is perſeverance, that obtains.

O Lord! teach me to pray as I ought; for, of myſelf, I know neither what to aſk, nor how.—Give me thy holy Spirit, to animate and aſſiſt me. Be thou the firſt to ſpeak to my heart, that it may learn how to ſpeak to thee. Give me the ſpirit of fervor, that my deſires may not be languid, and that I may not ſupplicate thoſe things with indifference, which are ineſtimable in their value. Penetrate me with a profound awe and reſpect for thy ſacred preſence; that I may be occupied with thee alone, and indulge no other thought. I will ſtrive to correct my levity, to avoid all diſtractions, and to recall my mind placidly, whenever I perceive it to be wandering. Increaſe, O God! my confidence. Behold thy beloved Son, expiring on the croſs. In his name alone I pray. It is by relying on his merits; it is by truſting to his promiſes; it is by obeying his command, that I hope to obtain of thy mercy whatever is needful for my ſalvation. If thou deferreſt to favor me, I will not be diſcouraged. I will continue, I will redouble my ſolicitations. My importunity will not diſpleaſe thee. Thou refuſeſt nothing to prayer, when urged with perſeverance.

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt baniſh all diſtractions, as ſoon as we obſerve them.

LECTURE

LECTURE XCVI.

ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

WHAT WE MUST ASK OF GOD.

Behold what manner of charity the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called, and ſhould be the ſons of God. 1. John iii. 1.

IT is from our Saviour himſelf we learn what we ought to petition for, and the manner, in which to aſk it. He has been pleaſed himſelf to draw up the addreſs, that we are to preſent to his eternal Father; and has dictated a form of prayer, which is hence ſtyled *the Lord's prayer.*

" Jeſus Chriſt," ſays St. Cyprian, " among " other regulations, productive of our happineſs, " has preſcribed a formula of prayer; to the end " that we might find a more ready audience from " the Father, when we addreſs him in the very " words, which his own Son has ſuggeſted. Let us " therefore pray," adds this holy Doctor, " as our " God and Maſter has taught us. It cannot but be " pleaſing to the Deity to hear a prayer, which " comes immediately from himſelf; which ſtrikes " his ears with the accents of Jeſus Chriſt, and in " which the Father acknowledges the words of his " Son. Since Chriſt is our advocate at the throne of

" mercy,

" mercy, let us uſe the ſame language as our pow-
" erful interceſſor. He aſſures us that his Father
" will grant the petitions, we may offer in his
" name: how much more will he be diſpoſed to do
" ſo, when we preſent our requeſts, not only in his
" name, but in his own terms and expreſſions!"
From theſe motives, the Church makes a continual uſe of this ſacred prayer. By this ſhe begins and terminates the divine office. She gives it, particularly, a place in the ſacrifice of the maſs; and recommends it to be daily and frequently uſed, eſpecially morning and evening, by every deſcription of her ſubjects.

The Lord's prayer is compoſed of a ſhort preface and ſeven petitions, the three firſt of which relate to God and the four remaining to ourſelves. It comprehends whatever we are authoriſed to aſk, or to deſire of the Almighty. It is the rule, by which to form our ſentiments and wiſhes. We are permitted, indeed, to pray in different words; but it is not allowed us to preſent any other demand, than what is compriſed therein. Every ſort of requeſt, which has not ſome connexion with it, is unworthy of a Chriſtian.

The preface conſiſts in theſe words; *Our Father, who art in heaven.* In this ſhort ſentence Jeſus Chriſt has united whatever is moſt likely to engage the Deity to hear us, with every motive, that can infuſe into us the ſentiments of reſpect, love and confidence. We call God our Father;

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and ſo in fact he is; firſt, by creation, having given us our life, and made us to his own image; and ſecondly, ſtill more, by the grace of regeneration; ſince he has adopted us, by baptiſm, for his children through Jeſus Chriſt. Becauſe we are his children, St. Paul ſays, he has repleniſhed us with his Spirit, which cries out *Father, Father*. O name of ſweetneſs and comfort! What affection, what gratitude, what confidence ought it not to inſpire us with! If it be true that God is our father, can we apprehend our prayers ſhould be rejected, when we remind him of a name, which he aſſumes ſo endearingly? No. Only let us fear to render ourſelves unworthy, by wilful diſobedience, of the appellation of his children. Nothing elſe can obſtruct his mercy, or eventually impede the effect of our prayers.

In addreſſing ourſelves to the Deity, we ſay, each of us individually, *Our Father*, and not *My Father*; becauſe, having all one common father, and all hoping for the ſame inheritance, we ought to pray not only for ourſelves, but likewiſe for all the faithful, whoſe brethren we are. A proof that we pray not in our own name, but in the name of Jeſus Chriſt; and in union with the whole body of the Church, of which we are members. We add, *Who art in heaven:* for though God be every where, yet we particularly regard the heavens as the ſeat of his glory. It is there he diſplays his magnificence, and ſhews himſelf face to face. It is thither we

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are called, as to our only true country, and the bliſsful inheritance, deſigned for us by our Father. In the time of prayer, therefore, let us raiſe up our minds to heaven; let us join with it's bleſſed inhabitants, and excite within our breaſt the conſolatory hope of poſſeſſing God eternally.

Thou permitteſt me, O God! thou even commandeſt me to call thee *Father*. This name, ſo dear to my heart, is a pledge of thy affection, and aſſures me of thy mercy. Thou art my Father, and the beſt of Fathers. What canſt thou refuſe me, that may conduce to my welfare. I aſk nothing of thee, O Father, but what thou thyſelf haſt taught me to pray for. The prayer, which I uſe, is worded by thee: thou wilt hear it, therefore, with complacency, and grant me it's requeſts. Nothing more do I deſire; for all my real wants are included in it. How happy to know that I have in heaven a Father, infinitely rich and infinitely kind; who is willing to remedy all my evils, and to enrich me with every thing good! O my Father, my affectionate Father! I preſent myſelf before thee with the confidence of thy child: and pour out my ſoul into thy tender, paternal boſom. How good art thou to conſider me, to treat me as thy child! What am I, dear Lord! to be ſo highly honored, ſo advantageouſly provided for? I am thy child: what then can be wanting to me? On this title, I may aſk for every thing, and ſhall be ſure of obtaining it.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould ſpeak to the Almighty as to a loving, affectionate Parent.

LECTURE XCVII.

THE FIRST PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Hallowed be thy name.

IT is certainly juſt that the firſt object of our wiſhes ſhould be the glory of God. If we are his children, nothing ought to be dearer to us than the honor of our Father. Wherefore, we begin by requeſting that his name be *hallowed*; that is to ſay, revered and glorified.

The name of God is holy of itſelf; nor is it poſſible to add to it any new degree of ſanctity.—But it is frequently diſhonored, as well by the behaviour, as by the converſation of mankind.—What we beg by this petition is that the ſacred name of the Deity may be known, praiſed and adored by all creatures; that every tongue may bleſs him; that the whole univerſe may pay him the homage, which is due to his Sovereign Majeſty, and that his glory may be ſpread through all the regions of the globe. There are ſtill nations, that are infidel, nations that are ignorant of God.

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We entreat him to open their eyes to his admirable light, and to diſcover himſelf to them. There are thoſe, who, although they know him, do not render him a pure worſhip: a prey to error and to the deluſions of deceitful, preſumptuous reaſon, they refuſe to ſtoop to the yoke of faith and to the authority, which he has eſtabliſhed. We beg him to ſhew them the truth, to remove their prejudices, and happily to reſtore them to the boſom of his Church. Finally, there are bad chriſtians, who, ſo far from ſerving God, inſult him by their crimes, and blaſpheme his mighty name. We beſeech him to grant them the grace of a ſincere converſion, and to enable them, in future, to glorify him by their conduct. We pray even for the juſt, who already honor God by the edification of their lives; that they may increaſe in virtue, and perſevere in righteouſneſs. But what, above all things, we ſhould deſire is to ſanctify the name of God ourſelves, to devote our whole being to it's glory, and to extend the adoration of it as widely as poſſible.

We ſanctify the name of God in *thought*, when we humble ourſelves ſincerely in the preſence of his Supreme Majeſty, and never think of what relates to him, but with reverence and awe. We ſanctify his holy name in *word*, when we ſpeak of him only with the feelings of internal adoration. We ſanctify this ſacred name in *deed*, when our lives are ſo exemplary, as to lead others to reſpect it, and

and to render him the tribute of their ſervice and obedience.

Whenever, therefore, Theophilus, you repeat this petition, *Hallowed be thy name*, you ſhould have a ſincere deſire to promote, as far as in your power, the glory of God; to induce others to honor him; and to impreſs them with the love of virtue, both by your words and by your example.—Without this deſire, your inſincere heart would give the lie to your tongue, and your own mouth would convict you; becauſe you would not wiſh cordially what you made a ſhew of requeſting.—What could you think of yourſelf, were you of the number of thoſe, who, while they petitioned God to glorify his name, led others to offend him? With what face can ſuch wretches, the agents of Satan, dare to beg of the Almighty that his holy name be honored; while they are laboring to ſeduce the innocent, to ſtifle in them the ſentiments of the fear of God and religion; while, not ſatisfied with being vicious themſelves, they endeavour to corrupt others, to ſhake the roots of their faith, to diſhearten them by ridicule; while they caſt that opprobrium on virtue, which is due only to vice, as if it were diſgraceful in a child to ſhew reſpect to his Father? To recite this divine prayer with ſuch diſpoſitions as theſe, would it not be outraging the Deity, inſtead of honoring his name? Would it not be pronouncing with our own lips the ſentence of our condemnation? Yes; wo to ſuch ſcandalous

lous ſinners, unleſs, before they ſay this prayer, they renounce their impiety, and be firmly determined, by a change of life, to contribute their part to the propagation of the divine honor; according to that of Jeſus Chriſt; *Let your light ſhine before men; that, ſeeing your good works, they may render glory to your heavenly Father.*

Give me, O God! thoſe ardent longings, which thou gaveſt formerly to thy prophet, when in the fervor of zeal, he exclaimed: *Sing to the Lord, all the earth, and bleſs his name. Sing joyfully to God and praiſe his greatneſs. The Lord's is the earth and the fulneſs thereof; let then all, that dwell therein, give glory to his praiſe, and all kings of the earth and princes reſpect him. All ye works of the Lord bleſs the Lord; ſing canticles to his honor; make the univerſe reſound with hymns of jubilation, and may he be revered and ſerved by all the ends of the earth.* But what I chiefly ſhould deſire is to ſanctify thy holy name myſelf. What I ſhould aſk of thee is that I may honor thee in my ſtate of life, as far as depends upon me: that I may not confine myſelf to mere words; but, by the purity of my morals, by the fervor of my devotion and by the regularity of my conduct, may offer to thee daily a ſacrifice of praiſe, and may render thee, till death, an inceſſant homage of adoration.

The Practical Inference.

That the glory of God ſhould be the end of all we do.

LECTURE XCVIII.

THE SECOND PETITION.

Thy kingdom come.

BY theſe words, we do not beg that God may poſſeſs a ſovereign power over the whole extent of created nature. This ſovereignty belongs to him, as his eſſential right; nor can any thing withdraw itſelf from the rule of his dominion. It is of this univerſal empire the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, when he ſays; *Thy kingdom, O Lord, is the kingdom of all ages, and thy empire extends from generation to generation.* But there is another ſort of kingdom; a kingdom of *grace*, to the extenſion of which we are called upon to cooperate: a kingdom wholly ſpiritual, in which the ſoul, aided by the divine aſſiſtance, obeys freely and willingly all the inſpirations of heaven, acquieſces in the will of God without reſerve, executes all his orders with promptneſs and fidelity, and owns no rule of conduct but his law and commandments: a kingdom, in which the heart yields itſelf captive to the Almighty, in order that he may take full poſſeſſion of it, and govern it, as he pleaſes. Such is the kingdom, we pray that God would eſtabliſh within us at preſent.—There is alſo a kingdom of *glory*, where the Deity has prepared immortal crowns for his elect; where he gives himſelf to them for their eternal reward; where he laviſhes all his treaſures on them; where

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he fills them with the abundance of the good things of his houſe, and inebriates them with the torrent of his ineffable delights; where, in fine, he makes them reign with him for ages everlaſting. Such is the kingdom, to whoſe coming we look forward.—What therefore we ſolicit is that God may reign in our hearts, by his grace, at preſent; and may make us reign eternally, in his glory, hereafter.

When you recite this petition, Theophilus, you ought ſincerely to wiſh that the reign of ſin and concupiſcence be annihilated within you; that your mind and your body be ſubjected to the Deity, and that he become the ſupreme maſter of whatever belongs to you. If you are enſlaved to bad habits and to the tyranny of vice, you ſhould bewail your unhappy ſervitude, and long to be reſtored to the liberty of God's children. After which, you ſhould raiſe your looks above this ſublunary earth, which is but the place of your exile; and aſpire to your celeſtial country, where, abſorpt in delights, you may reign with Chriſt for ever.—This pleaſing deſire ſhould be the object of all your wiſhes, the companion of all your labors. The life of man, ſhort as it is, is *filled with many miſeries*.—How can we be ſo fond of it, when we know that we are deſigned for a life of eternal bliſs? How dread the ſeperation from this periſhable body, which prevents us from ſeeing God, and being united to his Saints. While we inhabit theſe frames of clay, we are kept at a diſtance from the Lord.

But *we know that, if this our earthly houſe be diſſolved, we have a building of God; a houſe not made with hands, eternal in heaven.* What then can be more deſirable, than to be delivered from this priſon, to quit this viſible world, in which we are expoſed to many dangers, and in which we, every inſtant, run the riſk of being ruined, for eternity? A true Chriſtian has continually before his eyes the immenſe recompence, he expects. He conſiders himſelf as a mere traveller, during his abode in the fleſh. He is already a citizen of heaven, by the vigor of his faith and by the firmneſs of his hope. On the banks of the ſtreams of Babylon, his eyes flow with tears at the recollection of the bleſt Jeruſalem, his only true country. He often lifts his eyes to the ſummit of the holy mountain, the reſidence of peace, his looked for inheritance; where his Saviour ſhall crown him with the wreaths of immortality.

I lament, O my God! to ſee myſelf in danger of offending thee continually. When ſhall I be emancipated from this wretched ſervitude of ſin? When ſhall I be delivered from the tyranny of my paſſions? When wilt thou reign perfectly in my heart and it's affections? Unhappy me! When ſhall I be liberated from this body of death. Break, O Lord! the bonds, that attach me to the earth. *May* that bleſſed *kingdom come*, where I ſhall behold thee unveiled; where I ſhall love thee unrivalled; where I ſhall poſſeſs thee undiſturbed. I long to leave this world and to be with thee: nevertheleſs

vertheleſs, I do not preſume to aſk for death, becauſe I apprehend I may be unfit for it. Prepare me by thy grace, and give me the diſpoſition of thoſe virtuous ſouls, who bear life with patience, and meet death with alacrity. Alas, my God! do I not delude and deceive myſelf? In ſpite of the view, which faith gives me of heaven, I feel the preſſure of human miſery, which keeps me groveling upon earth. But they are the ſentiments of corrupt nature, which I diſclaim and renounce. Whether ſhe be willing or not, all my deſires ſhall tend to heaven. *May thy kingdom come.* May my ſoul, diſengaged from the ties of this earthly priſon, take it's flight, ere it be long, to the regions of the living. How greatly ſhould I be my own enemy, if, for the ſake of a tranſitory life, a life pregnant with wretchedneſs, I could wiſh to prolong my baniſhment, and to retard the enjoyment of my ſupreme felicity?

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould inceſſantly aſpire after the kingdom of heaven.

LECTURE XCIX.

THE THIRD PETITION.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

TO obtain of our Father the inheritance, he reſerves for us, and the kingdom, to which he deſtines us, we muſt accompliſh his will. This our Redeemer inculcates in that memorable ſentence; *Not every one, that ſaith to me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he, that doth the will of my Father.* For which reaſon, he enjoins us to ſay; *Thy will be done*; inaſmuch as we are bound to ſhew ourſelves ready to execute all his orders.

There is a will in God, which is the ſtandard of all our obligations; by which he commands what is right, and forbids what is wrong. This is the will the Pſalmiſt meant, when he ſaid; *Teach me to do thy will; make me walk in the way of thy precepts: inſpire me with a love of thy ordinances.* This divine will is diſcloſed to us in the commandments of God, in the precepts of the Church, and in the injunctions of Superiors. Wherefore, in repeating thoſe words; *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,* we beg of God the grace to obſerve his law, to obey his Church, and to ſubmit to all them, that he has appointed to conduct us: we pray that this obedience may be as perfect and complete, as that of the Angels and Saints, in the regions of bliſs.

bliſs. There, all obey the Deity with promptitude, with fidelity and with ardor. And do you, my dear Theophilus, obey him in like manner? Are you punctual in fulfilling his orders, and thoſe of ſuch, as hold his place? Yet, we cannot be ſerious in reciting this petition, unleſs our heart and tongue accord. It would be lying to the Almighty to aſk of him, with our lips, what our heart did not wiſh.

There is a will in God, which is the cauſe of all the events and occurrences of life; which ordains and directs whatever happens in the world.—It is not in our power either to accelerate or to retard them. Our duty, in reſpect to this divine will, is to adore and to ſubmit to it; to receive, with reſignation all, the evils, it is pleaſed to ſend us; and to accept, as from the hand of a parent, the corrections it inflicts. God permits ſuch things to befall us, to bring about the deſigns, which his mercy has upon us. If he viſits us with afflictions, it is becauſe he has a mind to ſave us. He deſires they ſhould ſerve for the expiation of our ſins. It is, therefore, an effect of his kindneſs, rather than of his juſtice, that he puniſhes us in this life: for which reaſon the Apoſtle ſays that the Lord chaſtiſes thoſe, he loves; proving by this very act that he conſiders them as his children: for where, he adds, is the child, who is not corrected by his father?

Wherefore,

Wherefore, what we beg by thoſe words; *Thy will be done*; is that we may bear with an entire ſubmiſſion all the ſufferings, he may allot for us; that, whatever happens, he may, at all times, find us patient, reſigned and perfectly conformed to the views of his providence. To ſay this prayer, then, with the diſpoſitions, it demands, we ſhould be cordially determined to renounce our own will. And in fact, nothing ſo advantageous to us, as to ſubject this ſtubborn will of ours to the will of the Supreme Being. The ſole cauſe of man's fall was that he preferred his own will to that of the Deity; and he can now be ſaved only by an oppoſite conduct. Take away ſelf-will, ſays St. Bernard, and hell will exiſt no longer. Of this perfect acquieſcence in the holy will of God our Saviour thus explains both his ſentiments and practice: *I am come*, he ſays, *on earth, not to do my will, but the will of my Father. My food is to do the will of him, that ſent me.* In fact, his whole life was a faithful performance of the orders of his Father. If he is born in a ſtable; if he ſpends his youth in a low, humiliating obſcurity, and the latter part of his time in the laborious functions of an ungrateful miniſtry; it is in compliance with theſe orders, by which he regulates every ſtep; infine, if the thread of his life is cut off by the moſt ignominious of puniſhments, it is becauſe the will of his Father muſt be accompliſhed, and not his own.

I cannot, my God! be ſaved but by doing thy will, by keeping thy commands. Thy law is holy,

holy, and my happineſs depends on obſerving it punctually. I ſubmit to it from my heart, and here earneſtly reſolve to be at all times ruled by it. Thou requireſt me to be docile to the inſtructions of my ſuperiors: wherefore, I will entertain for them that deference, which is due to their office.— I renounce that repugnance, which I feel, to be commanded. I will combat the pride, that inclines me to reſiſt them. If they find fault with and chide me, I will take it with ſubmiſſion; and will have no other concern than that of having merited their diſpleaſure. Thou deſireſt me to be exact in the diſcharge of all the duties, belonging to my ſtate.— I will endeavour ſo to be, and to turn every moment to the moſt ſolid advantage. I will give to prayer all the time, that is dedicated to it, and the like to my work; while to pleaſe and ſerve thee ſhall be my object in all things. But dear Lord, alas! what will become of my reſolutions, if thou doſt not aid me by thy grace! This grace therefore I now beg of thee, in the name of my Redeemer, who came into this world but to execute thy will, and *who was obedient unto death, even to the death of the croſs.*

The Practical Inference.

That we muſt do every thing with a view to accomplish the will of God.

LECTURE

LECTURE C.

THE FOURTH PETITION.

Give us this day our daily bread.

AFTER the three former petitions, which relate to the Deity, we aſk of our heavenly Father whatever is neceſſary for the ſupport of our ſouls or bodies. The Almighty is the fountain of every thing good; and provides for all our wants in the order of nature, as well as in that of grace. We are all, in his eyes, like indigent beggars, who have nothing but what we receive from his bounteous liberality. *All creatures*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *expect their food from thee, which thou giveſt them in time: thou openeſt thy hand, and filleſt them with bleſſings.*— The rich themſelves are obliged to ſue to him for their daily bread; that they may not forget that, whatever they poſſeſs, it is the gift of God, and that, without his protection, they may many ways be deprived of it.

Take notice, Theophilus, that we petition the Almighty, not for ſuperfluous riches, not for what may gratify ſenſuality, or our inſatiable pride; but ſolely for our bread; that is to ſay, for our ſupport and maintenance, according to our ſtation. And this even we aſk but for the preſent day: for our Saviour forbids us to be concerned about tomorrow, which we are not ſure of arriving at. He will have us truſt to his providence, and every day

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have recourſe to him; in a full aſſurance that we ſhall every day find in him a tender parent; always equally diſpoſed to befriend and aſſiſt us. *Be not ſolicitous*, he ſays himſelf, *what you ſhall eat, or what you ſhall drink, or wherewith you ſhall be clothed.— Your heavenly Father knoweth that you ſtand in need of all theſe things. Nor be anxious for the day to come; for the evil of each day is ſufficient for itſelf.* Nevertheleſs, this reliance on providence muſt not be ſuch as to make us indolent, or ſlothfully preſumptuous.— God does not mean to countenance idleneſs: but he orders us to do what we can; and when we have performed our part, to confide in him and in the inexhauſtible treaſures of his beneficent providence. The Iſraelites in the deſart received a daily ſupply of manna; and for forty ſucceſſive years it never once failed them. So far for the wants and exigencies of the body.

But we have a ſoul likewiſe, which demands it's proper ſuſtenance and nutriment: and it is this ſpiritual bread, that we principally ſolicit by this heaven-taught prayer. The food of the ſoul is the Word of God; it is Grace; it is the Euchariſt.— The Word of God ſupports the ſoul. It ſuſtains the juſt, and advances them in righteouſneſs: it reclaims the ſinner, and reſtores him to life. It is the ordinary manner, in which God confers and increaſes the knowledge of himſelf and the love of his ſervice. So far, therefore, from neglecting it, my child, you ſhould attend to it with reverence, and

and with an earneſt deſire of improving by it's leſſons.—Grace is as neceſſary for the ſoul, as bread is for the body: it is it's ſtrength, it's energy, it's life: and as our want of it is daily, ſo God would have us daily renew our petitions to procure it.—Finally, the holy Euchariſt is the nouriſhment of the ſoul, as Chriſt himſelf affirms. *Amen, amen, I ſay to you, unleſs you eat the fleſh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you ſhall have no life in you. I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. He, that eateth of this bread, ſhall live for ever.* The primitive Chriſtians, as I have elſewhere told you, partook every day of this celeſtial food; and it would be highly to our advantage could we imitate their example, at leaſt at a diſtance: for, without this ſuſtenance, the ſoul languiſhes and dies. But this is a matter of great delicacy; and how often we ſhould communicate muſt be left to the deciſion of our ſpiritual director. We ſhould, however, ſtrive ſo to live, as to be always in readineſs: and as the principal requiſite is purity of heart, in begging God to grant us *our daily bread*, we beſeech him to give us that internal cleanneſs, which may fit us to receive him.

May I preſume ſo to ſay, O God! Since thou art *our Father*, this character obliges thee to provide for thy children. I come to thee, therefore, as to the ſource of all good. In repreſenting my corporal wants, I aſk not for ſuperfluities, which would only be prejudicial, by my abuſe or miſapplication of them.

them. I beg ſolely what is neceſſary to live in a manner becoming my ſtate. It is not with an anxious look to futurity that I make this requeſt: it is only for to day: tomorrrow I will repeat it. It is juſt I ſhould daily confeſs to thee my indigence.—It is juſt I ſhould daily do homage to thy power.—But what I chiefly beg of thee, O Lord! is to relieve the neceſſities of my ſoul, by communicating to me thy word, thy grace, the divine ſacrament of thy body and blood. This heavenly food is, alas! infinitely more eſſential to me, than my corporal ſuſtenance. The life of the ſoul is incomparably more valuable, than that of the body. Enlighten me then with thy holy doctrine. Make me reliſh it, meditate on it and feed myſelf with it continually. Diffuſe into my heart the abundance of thy grace, to be my ſtrength and ſupport under the extremity of my weakneſs. Admit me often to thy table: make me run to it with avidity, and place all my delight in that bread of Angels, which imparts eternal life.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould expect every thing from providence, after uſing our own endeavours.

LECTURE

LECTURE CI.

THE FIFTH PETITION.

Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them, that treſpaſs againſt us.

A God ſo benevolent, a Father ſo kind ſhould ever experience in his children a complete docility, an inviolable attachment to his orders and injunctions. But the ſentiments of mankind and their conduct, in regard to the Deity, are very different from this. They offend him daily: nay, the generality infringe his precepts in points the moſt eſſential, and outrageouſly inſult him by the moſt grievous crimes. The juſt themſelves fall often into faults, that are repugnant to his ſanctity. They are not guilty, it is true, of ſuch ſins, as wound the ſoul mortally, and ſeparate it from God; but they every day do things, that excite his diſpleaſure.—*If we ſay we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves*, St. John tells us; *and the truth is not in us. In many things we all offend.*

From the knowledge of this our weakneſs, and of the depravity of our nature, Chriſt has made it a part of our duty to ſue to him every day for the forgiveneſs of our tranſgreſſions. He has inſerted this petition in the prayer, which he has taught us, from no other motive, than becauſe he wiſhes to pardon us. Had he not been ſo diſpoſed, he would not have laid this injunction on us. But,

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if we expect to profit by it, it is requiſite that we begin at leaſt to be ſorry for our faults: for it is a maxim in divinity that, without contrition, no ſin can be remitted, whether mortal or venial. God forgives only thoſe, who are concerned for having offended him, and who are determined to diſpleaſe him no more for the future. Yet we are not to deſiſt from praying, becauſe we ſeem to want this due tone of mind. On the contrary, we ſhould pray, in order to acquire it. When we ſay; *Forgive us our treſpaſſes*; we beg of God the grace of a ſincere repentance, that thus we may obtain the remiſſion of our ſins. In this diſpoſition, we are ſure of being heared, and of procuring a reconciliation with offended heaven. Yes, my dear Theophilus, whatever faults you may have committed, however enormous or multiplied, they will certainly be forgiven, if you are but truly ſorry for them. For this you have God's promiſe; to which he adds this ſole condition, that you yourſelf pardon them, that may have treſpaſſed againſt you.

In fact, is it juſt to deſire that the Almighty ſhould forgive us, if we ourſelves do not forgive the faults of our neighbour? Is it reaſonable to expect that God ſhould ſhew us indulgence, and forget the offences, we commit againſt him, if we are bent on reſenting the injuries, received from our brethren? The words of this petition are; *Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them, that treſpaſs againſt us.* Wherefore, the forgiveneſs, we grant to others, is

the meaſure of that, which we aſk for ourſelves.—If we pardon our neighbour, God will alſo pardon us: if we refuſe to forgive him, God will refuſe to forgive us. To recite this prayer, and to harbour at the ſame time any reſentment againſt ſuch, as have treated us wrongfully, would be ſaying plainly to the Deity; forgive me not, ſince I will not forgive them, that have injured me; revenge thyſelf on me, for I will be revenged on them. It would be pronouncing our own condemnation; in aſking for ourſelves a ſimilar malediction, as we imprecate on others. God forbid you be ever actuated by ſo criminal a ſpirit. Conſider it rather as a matter, which ſhould give you infinite comfort, that your reconciliation with God is annexed to a condition, dependant wholly on yourſelf. Accede to this condition readily. Pardon your brethren freely, without limitation or reſerve; that your heavenly Father may pardon you, according to the promiſe of Jeſus Chriſt.

O my God! I chearfully accept the condition, on which thou art pleaſed to grant me forgiveneſs. It is too much to my intereſt not to be gladly complied with. Thou haſt ſaid; *Forgive, and you ſhall be forgiven.* Yes, dear Lord, if I have been injured, by whomſoever it may have been, I now deſire to pardon it. I pardon it fully. I pardon it not only in word and in outward appearance; but ſincerely and from my heart. Such is, I hope, at preſent, my real diſpoſition. Far from me be all reſentment

ment, all deſires of revenge. If, in ſpite of me, there ſtill lurk in my heart any remnants of anger, I diſown them; I will reſiſt them; I will ſtrive to ſtifle their emotions, and to efface the ſlighteſt veſtige of them. On theſe terms, thou permitteſt me to ſay to thee; forgive, becauſe I forgive, and pardon me in a like manner. Thou wilt liſten to thy mercy, becauſe I liſten to my duty. I perform what thou haſt commanded; and I dare anſwer, with an humble confidence, that thou wilt do what thou haſt promiſed. If I be but kindly charitable and indulgent to my brethren, I ſhall find in thee a Father full of clemency and goodneſs.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould pardon every thing ſincerely, and never admit a thought of revenge.

LECTURE CII.

THE SIXTH PETITION.

And lead us not into temptation.

IT ſuffices not for our preſent ſtate that the mercy of God ſhould forgive us the ſins, we have already committed. We, moreover, need his grace to preſerve us from adding to them. To this we are conſtantly expoſed from the forcible temptations,

that aſſail us on every quarter. For this reaſon, we implore the divine protection, and ſay to the Almighty: *Lead us not into temptation*; thereby beſeeching him to compaſſionate our weakneſs, and either to ſave and defend us from temptations, or to enable us to overcome them.

The world, the devil and the fleſh act in concert for our deſtruction. The world tempts us by it's maxims, by it's language, by it's practice.—*Every creature*, ſays the Wiſe-man, *is become an object of temptation, and as a ſnare, to entangle the feet of the imprudent.*—The devil tempts us, by deluding our ſenſes, and by impreſſing our fancy with images, productive of bad thoughts. He is continually in motion, ſeeking to devour us: every engine does he put in play to effectuate our ruin.—Finally, the fleſh tempts us; that is to ſay, that concupiſcence and vicious propenſity, which we bring with us into life. This our natural corruption purſues us every where: it is within us, as a domeſtic enemy, and ſupplies the other two with arms, to attack us with greater advantage. *Every man*, St. James ſays, *is tempted and allured by his own concupiſcence.*

To be tempted is not a ſin, Theophilus: on the contrary, it is often an occaſion of merit, by the reſiſtance made to it. But it is always a ſin to conſent to temptation. If, through the apprehenſion of diſpleaſing God, we ſuppreſs it from the beginning, and refuſe conſtantly to hearken to it, no blame can apply to us: our oppoſition is an act

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of virtue, which the Deity will reward. But if we give admittance to the temptation, of whatever kind it be, if we entertain it with complacency, when once conſcious of it, we then become culpable.

Although temptation of itſelf be not ſinful, yet it is always dangerous. Nevertheleſs, we aſk not of God to be wholly exempted from temptations: for they are inevitable in this life, which is a ſtate of warfare and inceſſant hoſtilities. The greateſt Saints were tempted: the Son of God himſelf was tempted; that he might ſhew us how to conquer, and merit for us the like grace. What we ſolicit is not to be abandoned in the hour of temptation. So extreme is our weakneſs that the ſlighteſt trial is ſufficient to ſubdue and overſet us. The grace of God is our ſole reſource: and we therefore run into his arms, humbly confeſſing our miſery. We entreat him to preſerve us from all the temptations, that might probably overpower us; and as to thoſe, he is pleaſed to ſend for the trial of our virtue; to ſupport our infirmity and to give us the victory over them. With the aſſiſtance of the Almighty we can have nothing to fear. His power is competent to afford us ſucceſs, and even to make our temptations redound to our welfare.—This he will ſurely do, if we be careful not to expoſe ourſelves, and if we implore his gracious aid under the temptations that are unavoidable. We ſhall not then fight ſingly: God will combat with

us, and our triumph will be unqueſtionable. *God is faithful,* ſays St. Paul, *and will not ſuffer you to be tempted above your ſtrength; but will make you profit by the temptation, that you may be able to reſiſt.* He can not be wanting to his word: and this he has pledged to ſuccour thoſe, that place their reliance on him, and to protect all ſuch, as invoke his holy name.—They will, doubtleſs, be attacked: but nothing can hurt them, while God is their aſylum. The temptation will only ſerve to perfect their virtue, and to merit his grace to perſevere unto the end.

I cannot help being tempted, O God! and ſuch is my weakneſs that I juſtly ought to dread the very appearance of danger. Didſt thou not ſuſtain me by thy hand, I ſhould fall at every ſtep. This is the aid I requeſt of thee, when I repeat, as thou haſt ordered; *Lead me not into temptation.*—What am I of myſelf, but a veſſel of frailty, in conſtant danger of being broken? What elſe can I do, but, with uplifted eyes, addreſs myſelf to thee? God of my ſoul, which thou haſt redeemed! ſupport me under the perils, to which thou ſeeſt me unequal. Beſtow, in ſuch circumſtances, thy watchful attention on me, and redouble thy care to defend and protect me. Remember the high price, thou haſt paid for my ſoul; and permit not the world, the devil, or the fleſh to deprive thee of what thou haſt purchaſed with thy blood. No, dear Lord! I will never throw myſelf wilfully into the way of temptation. Could I do ſo, I

ſhould

ſhould be highly undeſerving of thy needful aſſiſtance. And for the temptations, that I cannot avoid, I will call upon thee, and await thy aid confidently. With the help of thy grace, I am aſſured of being ſafe.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould ſhun temptations, when we can; and, when we cannot, ſhould addreſs ourſelves to heaven.

LECTURE CIII.

THE SEVENTH PETITION.

But deliver us from evil. Amen.

THIS divine prayer concludes by begging of the Almighty to deliver us from evil; that is, my Theophilus, from the miſeries of life, from the enemies of our ſalvation and from eternal perdition.

To how many miſeries are we not liable in this our terreſtrial exiſtence! With what wretchedneſs is it not replete! Illneſs and pain aſſail the body; grief and anxiety haunt the ſoul.—Juſtly does the Church denominate this earth, on which we live, *a valley of tears*. We pray not to be entirely freed from the preſſure of theſe evils: that

cannot be; for they are inſeparable from our condition. But we pray to be delivered from ſuch of them, as might be the occaſions of our ſinning, and obſtruct our ſalvation. There is no other real evil, but thoſe that militate againſt our ſpiritual welfare. If ſickneſs, poverty or misfortune deſerve the name of evils, it is chiefly becauſe they diſquiet the ſoul, and expoſe it to the attacks of impatience, fretfulneſs and deſpair; and becauſe we have not ſufficient virtue to bear them without ſin. But the evils, that are endured patiently, ſo far from being hurtful, contribute to purify us, and to promote our ſanctification. However diſagreeable and afflictive, they are rather objects to be deſired, than unreaſonably feared. For, in the order of providence, they are the puniſhments of ſin, and the means to attain interminable bliſs. *We muſt paſs*, St. Paul tells us, *through many tribulations, to obtain a ſeat in heaven.*— However, we are allowed to ſolicit a deliverance from them, provided we prefer our prayer with an entire reſignation to the will of God, and be diſpoſed to receive them humbly, if he judges them neceſſary, or ſerviceable to our ſalvation. If we pray in this manner, and perſevere in our prayer, we ſhall undoubtedly find the true remedy of our miſeries. God will hear our petitions, and redreſs our grievances; either by removing them from us, or by, what is far more advantageous, empowering us to bear them.

Secondly,

Secondly, we beg to be delivered from the enemies of our ſalvation, and particularly from the devil, our moſt cruel opponent. This ſpirit of darkneſs, not content with ſeducing our proto-parents in paradiſe, and with involving their poſterity in evils without end, ceaſes not to infeſt us, and to ſpread wide his ſnares, to beguile and entrap us. But the Almighty checks his rage, and preſcribes him ſuch limits, as he is unable to paſs. "Our "enemy," ſays St. Cyprian, "can do us no harm "without the permiſſion of God. To the Deity "therefore we muſt look for help, and addreſs our "ſupplications."

Finally, we ſolicit God to deliver us from eternal damnation; the ſovereign evil, the irreparable evil, the evil, which is the complement and fulneſs of all other evils. In this horrid abyſs, in this fatal eternity, it will no longer avail us to beg to be delivered from it: we muſt for ever bear the weight of the divine indignation. There, no redemption muſt be hoped for, no happineſs expected, no ſalvation thought of; but a collection of all poſſible evils endured, and endured throughout eternity. With what ardor, with what perſeverance ſhould we not entreat to be ſecured from an evil ſo tremenduous! Can we ever be tired of repeating this petition, while a hope remains of our being able to obtain it?

Thou permitteſt me, O God! to requeſt thee to deliver me from temporal evils; from ſickneſs,

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from pain and from the numberleſs vexations of this probatory ſtate. But it is thy deſire that, in making this petition, I be cordially reſigned to the diſpenſations of thy providence. Wherefore, whenever I recite it, I would be always underſtood to include this ſubmiſſion. I have deſerved to ſuffer; and I offer to thee all ſuch trials in ſatisfaction for my ſins. Give me, O Lord! the virtue of patience, which I ſtand ſo much in need of. Have regard to my weakneſs, *O Father of mercies! O God of all conſolation!* and impart to me that ſacred unction, which aſſuages the pangs of wretchedneſs. But, beſides the evils of the body, there are others far more alarming; thoſe of the ſoul, which are eternal. From theſe, above all, O God! deliver me. Deliver me from the evil ſpirit; from the ſpirit of pride and indocility, from the ſpirit of lying and detraction, from the ſpirit of impurity and ſloth, which would drag me into hell. Alas, dear Lord! if, to avoid this laſt-mentioned evil, it be neceſſary I ſhould ſuffer any other whatſoever, I no longer entreat thee to ſpare me in this world. Strike; I give myſelf up to thee without reſerve or reſtriction. I am in the hands of a parent, who is acquainted with all that regards me. This conſideration is ſufficient to ſecure my tranquillity be my afflictions what they may.

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The Practical Inference

That we ſhould confidently apply to God under all our diſtreſſes.

LECTURE CIV.

ON THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION.

IN the next place after God, the firſt object of our veneration is the bleſſed Virgin, his holy Mother. She was ſelected, antecedently to time, to be the living temple of the Eternal Wiſdom, and the happy inſtrument of man's ſalvation. By her auguſt character of Mother of God, ſhe is elevated, in glory, above the Angels and Saints, of whom ſhe is the Queen.

The homage, therefore, which we pay to her, is peculiar to herſelf, and different from that, which we render to the other Saints. Repleniſhed, from her conception, with the moſt excellent gifts of heaven, ſhe was an accompliſhed model of every virtue, and the pureſt of God's creatures. By a particular privilege, ſhe was exempt from all ſin. Compaſſionate and kind, ſhe has the affection of a mother for us. And, in fact, we are become her children, from the time that Jeſus Chriſt, expiring on the croſs, recommended her to St. John, and, in him, to all Chriſtians, in the quality of a parent.

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She feels for our diſtreſſes. Her tender heart melts at the ſight of our neceſſities, when we expoſe them with confidence. "Never," ſays St. Bernard, "did any one invoke her, without finding the effects "of her benevolent protection."

She intereſts herſelf eſpecially in favor of young people, whoſe weakneſs ſhe is acquainted with. She knows the dangers, that ſurround them; the attempts, the devil makes upon them; the ſnares, he lays to catch them, and his efforts to ſeduce and to deprive them of their innocence.—She protects them with peculiar tenderneſs, when they ſeek ſhelter under her wings. Many inſtances might be produced of thoſe, whom ſhe has happily preſerved from the perils of that age. The lives of the Saints afford proofs without end of the virtue of her mediation, in behalf of endangered and perſecuted youth.

You will conceive how efficacious her interceſſion muſt be at the throne of grace, if you reflect that ſhe has with her Son the influence of a beloved Mother. Her power with Jeſus Chriſt is proportioned to his affection for her. Her Son, who is omnipotent, can refuſe nothing to the beſt, the moſt tender of parents. He ſhares, as we may ſay, his authority with her. Through her hands he diſpenſes his favors to mankind, and requires them to make application to her for the redreſs of their miſeries.

Wherefore,

Wherefore, Theophilus, you ſhould have recourſe to the bleſſed Virgin with the confidence of a child. Cheriſh a tender devotion towards her, and you will aſſuredly reap the fruit of your piety. In the time of temptation, implore her benevolence. If dejection oppreſſes, or paſſion torments you, think of her. In whatever emergencies, caſt yourſelf into her arms; there you will find comfort, animation and ſtrength. Are you virtuous and good? Through her means, you will acquire an augmentation of righteouſneſs. Are you ſo unfortunate as to have fallen into the abyſs of ſin? Run to her, *the mother of mercies, the refuge of ſinners.* She will reconcile you with her Son.—Whatever be your ſtate of life, reflect upon the virtues, that ſhone ſo brightly in her; more eſpecially her purity and her wonderful humility; and endeavour to copy them, to the beſt of your power. By living in this manner, you will be truly her child; and never will you periſh, while under her tutelage.

The beſt prayer, you can addreſs to her, is that, of which the Church makes ſuch frequent uſe; and which ſhe commonly unites with the one, taught us by Chriſt. This prayer, ſo ſublime in t's ſimplicity, recalls to our remembrance the grand myſtery of the incarnation. It includes, in a few words, the moſt perfect eulogy of this illuſtrious Virgin; and is calculated to impreſs us with an unreſerved truſt in her influence and kindneſs. It

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is ſtyled *The Angelical Salutation*; becauſe it begins with the words, with which Gabriel ſaluted her, on opening to her his miſſion. *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Bleſſed art thou among women.* Theſe laſt-mentioned words were, ſoon after, repeated by the pious Elizabeth, on the viſit, ſhe received from the Mother of God; to which ſhe added the following; *And bleſſed is the fruit of thy womb.* In addition to theſe the Church has ſubjoined; *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us ſinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.* Wherefore, when you ſay this prayer, your intention ſhould be to return thanks to the Deity, for the myſtery of the incarnation, to honor the bleſſed Virgin, who had ſo great a ſhare in it, and to expreſs to her the confidence, which you repoſe in her care.

Hail then, O ſacred Virgin! Thou haſt borne in thy chaſte womb the very author of grace, and received from his plenitude a ſuperabundance thereof, that has contributed to make thee the moſt perfect of creatures. *The Lord is with thee*, by the moſt intimate union; for of thee and of thy ſubſtance did he form himſelf a body. Thou wert filled with all bleſſings, and the applauſes of earth and heaven unite in extolling thee. *The fruit of thy womb* is the ſource of that benediction, which has ſpread through all nations, and gladdened the univerſe. *Holy Mary, Mother of God*, thou beholdeſt our miſeries, and art ſenſible of our wants. *Pray for us now.*

now. We are ſinners: obtain our repentance and the pardon of our ſins. Pray for us *at the hour of our death.* Lend us thy aſſiſtance at that critical moment, and ſupport us, by thy preſence, under the agonies of diſſolution. Preſent us, in perſon, to the throne of thy Son, who will then become our judge; and procure us, through his merits, a favorable ſentence.

The Practical Inference.

That we ſhould ſay the *Hail Mary* with attention and piety.



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ERRATA.

PAGE 47, line 13, for *allen* read *fallen.*

Page 91, line 8, for *torment* read *torments.*

Page 180, line 4, for *pray* read *pay.*

Page 218, line 9, for *becomes* read *become.*

Page 229, line 17, for *rigorous* read *less rigorous.*

Page 447, line 16, for *diffuse* read *infuse.*